

A Thousand Shades and One

an *Enola Holmes* fanfic

by **Rodo**

for *Spacecadet72*

-Agrimony-

There was a letter waiting. I immediately deduced who had sent it, of course. I had only just moved in and the number of people who knew my new address was rather limited – to no more than three, possibly six, people. The landlady might have told her sister about me. She regularly visited for tea. And Tewkesbury might have told his mother or uncle. My mother knew better than to share sensitive information, and of course she wouldn't send a letter. My landlady had no need to do so. Which left me with—

“Tewkesbury.”

The expensive paper certainly supported that theory. I opened the letter after entering my room, and, sure enough, there was Tewkesbury's looping writing, accompanied by silly pressed flowers, which was just like that useless boy. Although I had to admit – not to him, of course – that his uselessness was one of his more endearing qualities. Like a duckling or a puppy.

My dearest Enola,

I hope that you are settling in well in your new lodgings and that this letter finds you well. I am not used to writing letters, as you may notice—

Yes, that had been very obvious from the start.

—but now that I am a Lord, my mother insists that I should practice. And since you are the only friend I have, I thought I should start with you. I hope you'll enjoy the flower—

Unlikely. As you know, I've made my opinion on the topic very clear.

—and that your search for your mother is going well. If you haven't found her yet, I'm sure you will soon. You're the smartest person I know, so it's only a matter of time. You'll find her, like you found me, and like you found out what happened to my father. And if you ever need any help, you know where to find me.

Yours sincerely—

Well, you get the point. The pressed flowers were small, yellow, five-petaled blossoms. Agrimony. Representing thankfulness and gratitude. He picked them himself, no doubt. I sighed and put the letter (and flowers) on my desk.

-Red Carnation-

Dear Enola,

I was very glad to receive your letter. I'd already heard about your latest exploits, of course. You're not as subtle as you think you are, and I'm not as easily fooled. There are only so many young lady detectives who make the newspapers, and none can do so in quite as spectacular a fashion as you. So I understand why you declined my mother's latest invitation to dinner. Your brother must have read the paper as well. Still, one day, you're going to run out of excuses to decline her invitations. Until then—

There was another flower, of course. A red carnation, this time. In truth, Tewkesbury's attempts at code, such as they were, were cute. And mother's insistence on teaching me the language of flowers was actually paying off in unexpected ways. Red carnations of this particular shade stood for admiration. I almost regretted wriggling my way out of another of the Marchioness's invitations. Almost.

-Ivy-

It was one of those days. You know, the ones where everything goes sort of wrong no matter what you do? Well, it was one of those, and when you're me,

that means your genius detective brother gets uncomfortably close to catching you, something that would inevitably lead to being confined to an irritating finishing school, something I would rather avoid. I was standing in some back street, and my pursuers were closing in. There were only four choices, really: stay, run full-pelt away, get into a coach and hope the coachman wouldn't make a fuss, or climb over a wall into the garden of one of the rich people's town-houses. Staying was not an option, and my brother had longer legs than I. The coach or the town-house? Calculating the risk of whoever owned the house being at home in the middle of the day – and not on their estate – versus the risk that the coachman would throw me out of the coach because of my muddy dress, I decided to chance it. I chose the wall with the ivy and climbed.

I landed on the other side and turned around. And because it was one of those days, not only was the house not empty, the garden wasn't either.

“E—“

“Shhhh,” I hissed.

Tewkesbury shut his mouth. Of course it was his house. It was one of those days, after all. We listened as the commotion arrived on the other side of the wall. I pressed myself as deeply back into the ivy as I could manage. Since the ivy was so overgrown, the stupid leaves kept poking my eyes. But it worked. When someone poked their head over the wall, all they saw was a viscount sitting in a shady spot in his garden with a book on his knees.

“Sorry,” the person mumbled. It sounded suspiciously like Inspector Lestrade. “Didn't mean to disturb you. You haven't seen a young woman climb over here by any chance?”

Through the leaves, I saw Tewkesbury shake his head. Then he relaxed a fraction of a moment before boots hit the cobblestones on the other side. I didn't dare take a breath until I could no longer hear them at all. It was that kind of day.

“Thank you,” I told Tewkesbury when I wriggled out of the ivy. He was no longer sitting in the shade and instead walked over to me. “Is this your house?”

Tewkesbury shrugged. “Any time,” he said, with that stupid grin on his face. Then he reached up towards my head. I was having none of that, naturally, and tried to move out of the way.

“Wait,” he said and I held very, very still while he fished something out of my hair. It was an ivy leaf. He smiled widely when he showed it to me.

The next letter contained a pressed ivy leaf that looked suspiciously familiar. Fidelity. It was appropriate, I suppose. I still rolled my eyes.

-Snowdrop-

—As it turns out, it was a good idea of you to leave as fast as you did. It was your brother at the door. Or at least a man who introduced himself as Mycroft Holmes. With your family, you never know. He asked me a whole lot of questions and Mother as well, but we didn't give anything away, I promise you. In the end, he left, but not before telling me to tell you that he wants to speak with you. He's promising not to send you back to the school—

Which no doubt meant he and Sherlock had come up with an even worse plan. No, thank you.

—but I know you won't believe a word he says. Anyway, I hope to see you soon.

This time, it was a snowdrop. I was beginning to think Tewkesbury was unable to send letters without including some sort of flower. Hope. It springs eternal, I hear.

-Red Tulip-

“Why did you want to meet here, of all places?” I asked from behind Tewkesbury, close to the back of his head. He started and swivelled around like a flailing lamb. It took him a couple of moments to regain his ridiculous composure. Before long, he was puffed up like a nincompoop again. Not for the first time, I wondered why I'd taken him up on his invitation to spend an afternoon together.

“Well, I thought we would be inconspicuous,” he answered.

I raised an eyebrow.

“You know, lots of people to get lost in. Plus I come here often, so nobody would think it remarkable that I am stopping by. If I am being followed, that is. I

think you're being a bit paranoid ever since your brother showed up."

It wasn't paranoia if they really were out to force you to attend a finishing school.

"Well, you know I don't like flowers."

"You keep saying that," Tewkesbury said, making it very clear that he thought I was lying, or at least exaggerating the truth. I was not, of course. The flower market of Covent Garden was not my idea of a good meeting place. Except for the crowds, of course. Those were definitely a point in its favour if you had to plan for a clean getaway.

And – and you'll never hear me admit it out loud – there *was* something soothing about watching Tewkesbury examine the merchandise and consider these flowers and those. It was even endearing how he kept asking my opinion, as if I cared whether he put yellow or white roses in his drawing room. In the end, we had passed a companionable hour with one another, and we'd reached the final stall, where he picked up one single flower and held it under my nose while he executed a slight but formal bow. A red tulip, which meant...

"Oh." You'll understand why I was out of words for once. Tewkesbury certainly did, considering he blushed to match the tulip.

-Red Tulip, Encore-

I wondered whether to do it or not, but the next time Tewkesbury wrote, I remembered the red tulip that I'd not thrown away out of some sense of sentimentality. Instead, I'd put it between the pages of my world atlas and forgot all about it. It came out nicely, even if it didn't look quite as good as Tewkesbury's pressings.

Well, he would at least appreciate the gesture, I thought. So this time, it was me who put a pressed flower into the envelope.

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