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PSYCHOLOGICAL REALISM WITHIN THE DETECTIVE GENRE

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
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by

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ABSTRACT

PSYCHOLOGICAL REALISM WITHIN THE DETECTIVE GENRE

Juanita Rodriguez

The mundane depicts realness without dramatizing. We acknowledge how writers choose to illustrate their stories, emphasizing thematic content with conceptual individuals. We analyze how characters view the world and vice versa. I intend to highlight the subgenre: psychological realism- specifically- in detective fiction. Detectives cannot solve their inner desire. Their attachment to cases is due to gradual obsession. Coping mechanisms suppress this, leading to repetition. The purpose of the mode will help interpret the reasoning behind the intense interest. Authors such as Edgar Allan Poe, Sherlock Holmes, and Walter Mosley provide an understanding of mindsets and desire in situations. I will compare each of their fictional detectives' levels of engagement. Concepts surrounding identity crisis, internal and external conflict, and cinematic components are under inspection.

Keywords

Detective Fiction, Detective Film, Psychological Realism, Survival, Escapism, Theory of the "Mind"

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Introduction

Perspective is relative; it allows a person to look beyond what is right in front of them. Art can take many forms, and the interpretation of works can differ. There is this sense of secrecy within a visible world, and creative individuals reveal this through their illustrations. Writers, for instance, allow their audience to be captivated by the characters' lives. We do not have access to this, but by exploring these private lives and witnessing repetition we begin to understand them as a whole. In detective fiction, we survey not only clues in investigations but detectives as well. Approaching their findings and responses throughout portray fluctuating behavior to the point of consumption. This genre arose in the mid-nineteenth century when authors used traditional elements such as the "perfect" crime, alleged suspect, and observation to create a sense of psychological realism within the detective genre.

We can recognize a character's desires and the decisions either fulfill them or lead to an inevitable downfall. Characteristics are defined through dialogue and actions, demonstrating a real encounter. This embodiment in literature arose during the mid-19th century when authors depict a relatable life for their audiences to grasp. Many argue how authors use their writing to reflect the idea that realism allows readers to grasp the everyday. This is important because the depiction is less theatrical so readers can relate in a better, truthful manner. Typical routines are not easy to recognize in the outside world but are emphasized heavily in novels as they are the root of the story. Therefore, readers look to these story-driven novels with an expectation that the everyday worlds reflect an understanding of a realistic presence, which is significant because the technique ensures

objective authenticity. We can see a continuation of the nineteenth century's focus on the everyday in contemporary detective fiction as well. The detective fiction that I address in this thesis, which comes from both the nineteenth century and the late 20th century, demonstrates what real life cannot: disclosed visibility of common people. Diving into the ordinary reveals the significance of these concepts. For example, motive. Something that keeps a reader engaged is when a character has a motive. Desire can drive someone to take action and oftentimes realistic novels use habitual encounters to support the theoretical approach.

This thesis focuses specifically on detective fiction contained within genres of short stories. Detective fiction often- but did not exclusively- appear in the form of short stories or novellas in contrast to novels, and this is important to my argument because short stories arrive at the plot more concisely. Rather than a lengthy exploration with various characters and incidents, we can view a story with the main focus of one main occurrence and fewer characters.

There are advantages to authors writing short stories. Experiences that take place have a unique route versus events throughout a novel. The structure indicates the importance of the beginning and end. When it comes to demonstrating realism, the mundane has to be introduced swiftly for readers to notice. Since everyone is connected, readers can identify how they align with the story-driven novel. One aspect displaying this notion of realism is the use of repetition. For instance, when it comes to recurring words and mirrored images they reflect different meanings. These resurfaced words and images resemble scenes of awakening, which forces characters to look for a deeper

meaning, regarding the everyday. Thus, this is more than the reality effect, objects go beyond what they are. Now, short stories are capable of performing similar effects, however, the method varies. While both include a plot, short stories are not as extended with their conflicts. The attention is not necessarily on the plot but on what circles it. Other elements can help develop characters. Hence, the level of craft evokes feelings and attachment regardless of how short the situation may seem. Experiences are more concise therefore more intimate with the personal. Writers purposely focus on one angle rather than highlighting multiple points to establish the central idea. In addition to that, problems presented are typically resolved quicker.

My thesis will consider the question of insight as it relates to the angle of a character. It is important to recognize what is surrounding such as relationships with other people and objects. These strings tie together for the overall web of the story, which influences simple perceptions. There are many subgenres of realism and one that highlights both elements mentioned is psychological realism. Like other forms of literature, we gain access to certain aspects, however when it comes to psychological realism the “why?” is stressed mostly. The “why” in question means the rationale behind a character’s movement or thinking. In this subgenre of realism, it is crucial for analysis because there is an incentive for readers to deduce. The reason behind a decision, the mindset wavering in situations, and the overall want is a relative idea that ties in everything. Moreover, in regards to characters viewing the world and vice versa, it comes down to routines and middle aspects of the ordinary. Through those findings and repetition, we can interpret consistent means of obsession.

My purpose for this thesis is to illustrate the representation of psychological realism within the detective fiction genre. Realism is the umbrella of literary technique and underneath we come across psychology. Through this mode, one can see its significance. Detective fiction is a popular genre that captures readers with its complexity and intriguing characters. They provide their audience insight into human behavior, desire for justice, and the power of logic and deduction in solving mysteries. As I go through the authors, Edgar Allen Poe, Arthur Conan Doyle, and Walter Mosley, I will explain how their detectives are unable to solve one major case. They each possess a coping mechanism that suppresses their inner desire. As I will mention throughout my thesis, this genre explores characters' inner desires, whether that is the suspects in question or the detectives themselves. We encounter people who want justice, and their desires tend to consume them to the point of obsession. By clearing their heads, they can distance themselves emotionally and/or maintain a level of detachment. However, this endless cycle causes addiction and more stress they initially want to release. C. Auguste Dupin is challenged through amusement and value answers revealed. Sherlock Holmes is also interested in a challenge and needs that engagement to advance his critical mind. Lastly, Ezekial Rawlins perceives life differently than what the world wants him to view. Despite the difference in their paths, they develop similarly because of their experiences. Therefore, readers can see the importance of understanding this imperative mystery.

I argue that the mystery is not only with detectives' inner desire but the authors' as well. This could be regarding man vs. self, man vs. audience, man vs. the world, or a combination of all. The mind of an author in the detective genre focuses on crafting a

mystery with a suspenseful atmosphere that engages the audience. The constructed plot, characters, and clues allow us to keep guessing. In addition to that, detective fiction authors have a certain level of understanding of human behavior and psychology. Surrounding a realistic character with the mundane and developing them through an intricate plot is profound. My concluding thoughts will echo my earlier statements about how detective fiction appeals to readers as we progress over time. We can see that from the nineteenth century to the twentieth century, and my final chapter will transition to the twenty-first century. That chapter is a bonus, featuring my original take on detective fiction as it continues to convey points that complement earlier centuries and their demonstrations. As I discuss throughout this thesis, I will track realism within detective literature from the mid-nineteenth century to the later 20th century, focusing on the work of Edgar Allan Poe as the establishing author of the genre, and then moving towards the late 19th century with fictional short stories by Arthur Conan Doyle. As time progresses and language transcends, one can see how realism is still a valid part of literature. Through a psychological lens of perspective and reality, readers can still find a repetition of the everyday and how that affects characters. This is a matter of reflection and whom we are viewing. It is remarkable how findings mirror one another as time moves along. By the use of repeated coping mechanisms to “escape” the one mystery that cannot be solved, the question detectives fail to answer is their inner desire. Detectives use cases from a teleological standpoint to showcase potential, however, there is a constant, almost obsessive, need to prove themselves. In chapter 1, titled, "We Existed Within Ourselves Alone," I will first focus on the person who brought the detective genre into fruition,

Edgar Allan Poe, using his three short stories, "*The Murders in the Rue Morgue*" (1841), "*The Mystery of Marie Roget*" (1845), and "*The Purloined Letter*" (1845) to argue how the detective Dupin hooks an audience through his observations. I will then transition to Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes in the second chapter, "It is My Business to Know What Other People Do Not Know" with the support of the short stories, "*A Scandal in Bohemia*" (1891), "*A Case of Identity*" (1891), and "*His Last Bow*" (1917) to continue the idea that particular points make or break investigations. In Chapter 3, "And I believe somehow that I could live through this bad dream," I consider a filmic adaptation of a later twentieth-century detective fiction originally written by Walter Mosley, highlighting the 1995 film "*Devil in a Blue Dress*."

Chapter 1: “We Existed Within Ourselves Alone.”

There are three short stories written by Edgar Allen Poe that demonstrate an emphasis on observation while exploring the mode of psychological realism: “*The Murders in the Rue Morgue*,” “*The Mystery of Marie Roget*,” and “*The Purloined Letter*.” I intend to analyze the stories while implementing ideas from various scholars to prove the suggestion that inner desire is suppressed within a detective’s case. Dupin and the unmanned narrator work to find an outcome, but the purpose behind the constant search is more of a fixation than one would expect. Throughout the readings, there are instances where I will discuss how Dupin has coping mechanisms so that he does not face the mystery of wanting to be solved. These mechanisms reflect in the way he ventures as a detective.

In light of the genre, two distinctions should be addressed: Classic detectives and Hardboiled detectives. Like all stories, certain aspects convey greatly to a reader such as setting, characters, and perspective. Detective fiction is no different, I believe the very basis of the genre holds the key to capturing an audience. For instance, the French fictional character, C. Auguste Dupin, was made by Edgar Allan Poe. He was considered the first detective created, setting as both a model and inspiration for other well-known detectives in literature, i.e. Sherlock Holmes, Miss Marple, Sam Spade, etc. Considering he was the first introduced to this genre of writing, he has the qualities of a Classic detective. The Classics were made known in the nineteenth century, attributed to a traditional sense- solving crimes with utmost confidence every time. Despite hints

of eccentricity, detectives like Dupin are skillful, typically staying in control even if odds are against them. While that is the case, I can argue that Dupin possesses traits resembling a Hardboiled detective as well. Hardboiled detectives were introduced in the early twentieth century, and considered to be a subgenre of mystery and crime fiction once the style flourished. From there, writers and fans of detective literature found its association with film noir. They are both similar in moods of pessimism and cynical tones. Hardboiled literature portrays intense and darker realism in comparison to Classic detective fiction. One way to illustrate the difference is through setting. Classic detectives are often set in a secluded area to stay attentive to the mystery. On the other hand, Hardboiled Detectives are set in the city with images of grim and unfair realities characters have to encounter. Taking into account Dupin's setting, France in the mid-nineteenth century, detectives are unfamiliar so people rely solely on policemen. One can see that Dupin is not a professional in his line of work, but contributes with great analytical thinking to assist the police. One reason I will explore further is his emotional tie to the work he takes. Classic detectives usually are not as complex in comparison to Hardboiled characters, and the way Dupin surveys situations he encounters is interesting. It seems he merely takes on these cases to challenge his mind rather than the kindness of his heart. He is more amused at the mystery unfolding and prefers to stay ahead of the criminal. Leading versus following demonstrates how a detective values the mystery evolving.

John Gruesser breaks down the three detective fiction stories with the idea that there is a "battle between author and reader... but one form of competition Poe

incorporates into the genre” (Gruesser, pg 5). According to his essay, the first competition is between Dupin and the narrator, policemen, and journalists. The second competition is between Poe and his readers, in which Gruesser elaborates that he wants his audience to “arrive at a solution” by utilizing the first person narrative to “heighten the illusion of a fair contest.” The third competition is quite interesting as it branches my intention of this essay even more. He states, as the most important, “Poe, in effect, competes with himself in the sequels, striving to rework, undermine, parody, and outdo what he has already done” (pg 6). If characters from the detective genre constantly undergo cases with the need to prove themselves, whilst competing with other characters and the readers, a reflection of the author is recognized. There is this ideology within the fin de siècle, end of the century, where characters who “survive” or otherwise live until the end of the story subject themselves to the rules. Bending or breaking those rules leads to “death” or “escaping.” If one were to compare this to detectives and authors, they survive by solving mysteries but continue to break the rules with their coping mechanisms. Dupin’s resistance to engaging the mystery is interesting and important in awareness of his psychology. He is a critical thinker who unconventionally produces results and his style clashes with officers because of the difference in approach. Dupin chooses to reject the procedure that follows an obvious pattern ie: specific facts or common clues to seek original ways. With his psyche, I believe that he treats his skills of crime solving as a game, one that keeps him concentrated despite opinions of the unusual. His coping mechanism would then be enduring the unorthodox, continuing his “game” of exploration to the point of an intense attachment. Think of his resistance like the image of a pulley

system, where futility in strength can either encourage or discourage a person. It is the former in Dupin's case but with the conjunction of emotional separation. I argue that authors like Edgar Allan Poe use their characters to prove their capability to themselves in literature. Through competitive behavior, I will discuss how Poe and Dupin are more alike than one would expect. There are instances where authors insert their traits into their characters. While some might argue the action is therapeutic for writers, there is an extension of themselves that should be analyzed. Depending on who the fictional characters are and how they unfold, one should be aware of the difference between quirky and alarming behavior. In this case, Poe and Dupin, both question things in awe and are drawn to existences with gloomy and bizarre auras. Regarding internal and external conflict, I believe this surrounds Man vs. self in addition to Man vs. Man. I argue the likelihood of the author struggling with inner desire as well, which inadvertently transitions to Dupin. Thus, both position themselves to overcome the next anticipated hurdle. Brianna Wiest has analyzed the methodology behind this kind of purpose. She is aware of how people "do this naturally... when confronted with challenging times," and she expands on the belief behind enduring and challenging oneself by quoting Dabrowski's positive disintegration theory, arguing that "crises and stress are not just important for psychological maturation, but usually necessary" (Forbes). While I agree that maturing psychologically is important and necessary in some cases, if the need to do so resurfaces quite often, I believe this is a point of consumption with the belief of validation. Separating feelings can be arguably beneficial or a hindrance, however, it becomes a choice with authors and characters in the detective genre. That decision

reoccurs to a point of desire. It is a constant reminder “to endure discomfort and capitalize on challenge{s}... likely a product of the need for affect, which is the intensity at which people want to feel anything” (Forbes).

His Own Ratiocination

In addition to being consumed by constant validation, the broadening of Edgar Allan Poe and his character Auguste Dupin is intriguing. I have mentioned the competition the two share, but a real-life letter makes the mystery more entangled yet entertaining. Ffrangcon Lewis analyzes a letter Poe wrote in 1846 to a friend, Philip Cooke, where he assesses his “detective tales” or ‘ratiocination.’ The term can be best defined as twisting morality for the sake of intuitive reasoning and behavior. To reject the norm, which is right and wrong, would be the very essence of nineteenth-century literature. This is not only for the rise of detective fiction, but to remark gothic, realistic, and various aspects in other works of writing. Using what Poe termed "ratiocination," C. Auguste Dupin combines his considerable intellect with creative imagination, even putting himself in the mind of the criminal. When it comes to the perspective of the stories, someone else is describing the detective rather than the audience reading from their point of view. These short stories in particular are very interesting because- echoing an earlier statement- the narrator does not have a name. I argue the idea that this unidentified narrator is just another extension of the author. I make this argument because

humans in general want to feel satisfied or content with life. This human-conditioned mindset leads to the action of immediately thinking or actively moving on once one goal is obtained. We operate like this because we are anticipating upon looking forward, which Edgar Allan Poe does through his making of the three short detective stories.

“The mental features discourse of as the analytical, are, in themselves, but little susceptible of analysis. We appreciate them only in their effects.”

- Edgar Allan Poe, *The Murders in the Rue Morgue*

I began with this quote because it serves as one of the overall points the author conveys through his detective. One can see that it is set as a standard for the narrative structure through the use of forensic science in the field. The structure and its exploration of the psychology of the criminal mind have great influence. “*The Murders in the Rue Morgue*” is significant because it is considered the first modern detective story. As mentioned, Edgar Allan Poe is seen as an inspiration for this genre. Dupin's approach to solving this mystery involves crucial details such as hair samples and fingerprints. He relies on cleverness rather than analytical thinking. This brings a notion of imaginative vs. “critical,” allowing readers to look beyond the norm.

He does not stray from analyzing, but he is aware that it alone will not produce results. His methods are not similar to a traditional detective since he thinks and acts like a gambler. Like many people with a fixation, one of Dupin's motivations is revenge. He acts on his own. Poe continues this imaginative notion where differences in personalities create conflict. Hence, inner desires weigh on a character's true self and alter ego. Additionally, we can make a comparison to chess, and his fixation with the game is substantial in understanding his practice. Moves matter, being able to tell upon one move whether the opponent is going to win or lose. Little slip-ups are noted for a reason. One is aware of Dupin's appreciation for books and this gathers a sense of opening the mind to various outcomes. Poe writes, "To observe attentively is to remember distinctly; and, so far, the concentrative chess player will do very well at whist... But it is in matters beyond the limits of mere rule that the skill of the analyst is evinced." His deductive reasoning stems from this- careful analyzing proves to be useful. The author would use the word "acumen" towards the beginning of the story, which means depth of perception. I believe this continues the demonstration of Dupin as we begin to recognize his abilities. Power to see what is not evident to the average mind. Moreover, the author states, "In this latter, where the pieces have different and bizarre motions, with various and variable values, what is only complex is mistaken (a not unusual error) for what is profound." To speak again on his method for solving mysteries, he chooses to examine it in a unique way that is different from the police. For instance in the first detective story, in viewing the crime scene, officers overly displayed their disgust at the violence at hand. For many people looking at the situation, it can be repulsive, but it can also be distracting which is what

Dupin actively avoids. He does not want to overlook a valuable clue because of the cruel scene, a worthy note regarding emotional detachment. In doing so, the detective works collectively to put himself at a natural advantage because, in the quote of the author, “the necessary knowledge is that of what to observe.” Rather than giving in to what the eyes see at first glance, the horrific situation, he swiftly deters feelings from interfering with his task. He looks into the crime scene more deeply to gain clues from the smallest details.

“We make chance a matter of absolute calculation.”

- Edgar Allan Poe, *The Mystery of Marie Roget*

My purpose for opening with this quote is to elaborate on the word "chance," and what it does for Dupin, Poe, and the audience. The depiction of the media in “*The Mystery of Marie Roget*” is interesting because Edgar Allan Poe uses the real-life case of Mary Cecilla Rogers to bring a sense of realism in a way not many would choose to approach. I say this because utilizing an actual case, regardless if it is shaped for fiction, could raise concerns about public opinion. Instead of viewing this as negative, I perceive this as a method through the mode of realism. Again, we are introduced to the everyday

with behavior that is not artificial. Although it is not the actual case of Rogers, the fictional events provide a sense of genuine chance. From the perspective of the author, he can portray a larger theme of truth in tangible details. Within the short story, Poe states, “And this steadfast adherence to principle, with rigorous disregard of the conflicting exception, is a sure mode of attaining the maximum of attainable truth...” Edgar Allan Poe wants to find the answer, or at the very least gain a sense of understanding behind Roger’s incident, and Dupin seeks the same. In addition to revenge, the detective’s motivation is justice. Getting to the solution through his intellectual skills presents a prominence of his complexity. His psychological behavior mirrors a double-edged sword; on one hand, a reader commends his willingness to arrive at an answer but questions his humanity from his lack of emotion towards the cruelty. Furthermore, the text states, “Accident is admitted as a portion of the substructure... We subject the unlooked for and unimagined, to the mathematical formulae of the schools.” This goes back to Dupin’s gamble on intelligence and how clever thinking develops the notion of perception. What is interesting about this story in comparison to the first one is that restriction comes into play. Auguste Dupin's deductive reasoning is one of his specialties, however, limitations cause him to venture a different route. There is still an emphasis on observation and intuition, but he also needs to focus on human behavior to solve the mystery. Another significant quote from the short story is, “... the question is of will, and not, as the insanity of logic has assumed, of power.” To that end, the word “will” connects to the word “chance” in the epigraph. Some may argue a connection to “power” as well, but in this scenario, I believe that “will” means luck. Just as Dupin relies on his wit, a chance he

takes to solve a crime, his will conveys determination based on a possibility. Hence, there is a recognition of the risk that keeps the detective interested because such jeopardy boosts his desire.

“Nothing is more hateful to wisdom than excessive cleverness.”

- Edgar Allan Poe, *“The Purloined Letter”*

The first thing I would like to highlight is how a letter becomes the focal point of the mystery. It is a common object, which fits the mundane aspect, thus perfect for represented mode. This shows that everyday objects hold great value, so readers follow Dupin along as he investigates the stolen letter. In this short story, we delve into power and corruption, which some might argue Poe has already touched upon in Marie Roget's story. However, I believe his look into the corrupt nature in positions of power develops Dupin's character. The narrator states, “As a poet and as a mathematician, he would reason well; as a mere mathematician he could not have reasoned at all.” It connects to the "corruption" of his state, in the sense of an ambitious cycle continuing to obsession. While the story extends the recognition of attentive detailing, readers should take into account how Dupin unfolds. The Prefect is the person who enlists Dupin for assistance even though he finds the case abnormal, being that a stolen letter seems simple. However,

simple cases- similar to recovering tiny details- are captivating to the detective. To figure out the mystery behind this situation, he puts himself at risk from a political standpoint through a disguise. While this leads him into solving the theft of the letter, his reputation with the government is viewed resentfully. This is another example of the different actions and beliefs between Dupin and the officers. The detective works using results and enacting deceitfully for a chance to happen. To reflect on my claim of difference between the two, a point I would like to highlight within the short story is, "...it is, in the latter, that intellects of the vaster capacity, while more forcible, more constant, and more eventful in their movements than those of inferior grade, are yet the less readily moved, and more embarrassed, and full of hesitation in the first few steps of their progress." In other words, the officers- from the perspective of Poe and Dupin- have the ability to perceive, but other factors inhibit a wider comprehension. One can see this idea of varied versions of reality through this distinction.

Chapter 2: “It is My Business to Know What Other People Do Not Know”

Along with the ideologies found within Poe’s creation of Auguste Dupin, Arthur Conan Doyle uses psychological realism within detective fiction through his character Sherlock Holmes. Again, as stated in the previous chapter, there are distinctions in the literary genre of detective fiction. Following the “traditional” route, this is another encounter where we recognize a depicted genius, capable of solving the case every time. Likewise is a matter of personality, both benefiting and hindering any situation. By being in control of the scenario, readers can understand how investigations run smoothly with one thing in mind: reason. Just as Dupin examines with great analytical abilities, Holmes investigates with equal rationale. It is as though the detective’s luck never runs out and oftentimes, a person can rely on someone with grand favor. However, my debate remains, seeing how clever thinking and problem-solving are attributes that can lead a person so far. Doyle’s short stories, “*A Scandal in Bohemia*” (1891), “*A Case of Identity*” (1891), and “*His Last Bow*” (1917) illustrate an ongoing demonstration of the Classic in complexity. A remade vision of reality, leading from obsessive behavior and cognitive tendency. One common notion that I will illustrate in Doyle's short stories is the interest in everyday life. This intrigue with realism among various walks coexists with knowledge. As readers gather an understanding of Holmes, we notice how observation reveals knowledge. My argument is that Sherlock Holmes recognizes this mundane, but

dives deeper psychologically which uncovers a darker realism. I will discuss instances of situational behavior that push the matter of desire and motivation further along this chapter.

The observant nature of detectives is a common thread that can be analyzed through the genre, and as I discussed in the previous chapter the portrayal of fascination falls in line with the detective's attachment to cases. This intrigue can be a combination of both seeking justice or revenge and achieving self-recognition. The intellectual thrill of mysteries creates a challenge they desire to solve. Questions surrounding the notion of identity and an author's choice of depiction demonstrate overall being. Despite the argument that classic detectives lack complexity, I believe there are moments of in-depth persona shown through obsession. It leads back to the question of interest and purpose, the consistency is through the repeated cycle of self-consciousness. While detectives are highly capable of their duty, they need to prove it to themselves. The mind resembles a scale where self-doubt weighs heavily rather than finding a balance that stays true to who they are. It becomes a hidden motivation to continue their tasks and help others. Thus, detectives use coping mechanisms to suppress the mystery surrounding inner desire.

Fear, Fearless; Clue, Clueless

In Conan Doyle's fiction, everyone acknowledges Sherlock Holmes' expertise, and that causes others to either seek him for assistance or steer clear out of fear. The latter, this idea of fear, could be a sign of the unknown. Holmes can recognize a situation from something as simple as a person's handwriting or the shirt sleeve. Observing minor

details to grasp the general picture can frighten someone. For a stranger to pinpoint specific things about you, would bring this sense of skepticism. Being one step ahead can benefit situations rather than being completely clueless. He is also a man of science, fascinated by cause and effect. This could be a reflection in his work, mixing chemicals, adding or removing solutions- mirroring the factors used in a crime. It is a matter of doing whatever it takes to solve the mystery, that is how Sherlock Holmes functions. Science leads to discoveries and answers are revealed one way or another. The longevity of the discovery could frustrate him, but there is also the feeling of excitement. Quick and simple revelations are not as captivating. One might argue this type of engagement seems cruel and vindictive, however, I believe this occurrence is due to constant attachment to justice. Approaches become addicting and for Holmes, revelation is hidden. I believe this claim is conveyed effectively in Doyle's short story series Sherlock Holmes because brief moments provide significant means in terms of the dynamic of our main character. The difference between this and his novel series is that mapped-out chapters can stand alone in the realm of a short story fiction. Furthermore, considering the genre of the detective, our findings from the reading are straight to the point. The single plotline excludes the development of more complicated scenarios novels explore, however, the theme- especially in the detective genre- is repeated for readers. To that point, the limitation in length leaves room for other means of expression.

There is a connection between writing and cognition. Ayesha Dar explains the importance of psychology in her research paper and how it supports a writer by focusing on various components allowing the story to be more intriguing. This critical discourse

conveys the idea of an author influencing society instead of society influencing the author, and I believe this can be argued for detectives as well. She articulates psychological elements such as “stream of consciousness” and “interior monologue” eliciting “sympathy and compassion for characters.” The subgenre of psychological realism is so profound as we come across well-developed individuals. Stating the idea from novelist and psychologist Johnathan Kellerman, the realm of psychological fiction is “synchronous,” and the illustration is an “attempt to better understand people” (Dar, 285). In addition, the scholar states, “Psychology promotes all that we are and everything we do... Studying human behavior in Literature and Psychology together is interrelated and mutually beneficial.” Dar goes on to convey the idea of literature “evolving oneself” and this phrase is so wonderful as it emphasizes how the reader marvelously changes to the mindset of the writer. The scholar also makes that connection based upon E.M. Forster, who quotes, “What is wonderful about great literature is that it transforms the man who reads it toward the condition of a man who wrote.” Based on these quotes, I will show how Sherlock Holmes’s behavior transforms throughout the three short stories.

“A Scandal in Bohemia” (1891)

Along with “*His Last Bow*,” another short story I would like to focus on is “*A Scandal in Bohemia*.” The premise behind this piece is that Sherlock Holmes is hired by the King to find a photograph of a certain lady. Despite the many attempts, the King has failed to retrieve it himself so he enlists Holmes. One theme within this story is that looks can be deceiving. I find it rare to encounter female characters who are not developed with

the typical “emotional” traits. In “*A Scandal in Bohemia*,” we are introduced to Irene Adler who impresses Sherlock Holmes with her witty charm. She is presented as a strong, independent woman who is not afraid to challenge anyone- including the detective. Her behavior and more importantly his response does not go unnoticed by Dr. Watson. According to him, “He used to make merry over the cleverness of women, but I have not heard him do it of late. And when he speaks of Irene Adler, or where he refers to her photograph, it is always under the honorable title of the woman.” Naturally, Holmes does not retreat from such a strong-willed attitude, so there is an admiration for the lady. This is not a romantic pursuit, but a position out of respect. As I mentioned, the detective has to be engaged constantly. Following a routine becomes bothersome so to face an individual like Adler, it is an interest he would like to explore. Just as she intends to challenge him with the circumstance she is in, Holmes has a similar plan. With that being said, even though this is an intrigue of the mind, Sherlock Holmes is usually logical and unemotional. This behavior towards the scene with Adler demonstrates the depth of Holmes' character, making readers understand him more. To carry on this idea, Doyle writes, “But for the trained reasoner to admit such intrusions into his own delicate and finely adjusted temperament was to introduce a distracting factor which might throw a doubt upon all his mental results..”

Readers must be revealed to this side because Holmes is a human being. His eccentric allure as a detective is unique, but featuring relatable habits leave less room for disconnect. We see a character evolve as he is thrown into a scenario unexpectedly. It adds complexity, and choosing how to overcome the situation is even more interesting-

reason enough to show he is more than an intelligent detective.

“A Case of Identity” (1891)

Furthermore, in the text, “*A Case of Identity*,” Miss Sutherland thought that her fiance wanted her to wait until they disappeared. The truth was revealed by Holmes that her lover was a facade, disguised as her stepfather who was only after her money. In comparison to the introduction of Irene Adler, Miss Sutherland is a typical representation of the Victorian woman, emotional, illogical, and hopeless romantic. The deceptive appearance can be used in this example as well, however, there is also the theme of everyday life. The story focuses on the social and cultural norms of this period, especially regarding women's roles and expectations. Doyle uses Sutherland as an example of how common women were recognized as passive and "emotional" in the Victorian Era and literature. In addition, we can see how men are portrayed, which Holmes investigates as he helps Sutherland. We conclude that her stepfather and mysterious fiance were the same. The stepfather orchestrated this out of greed. This leads to a recurring theme in Doyle's stories and reflects the idea that things are not always as they appear. This can be concluded as the text states, “Life is infinitely stranger than anything which the mind of man could invent.” Readers can appreciate Holmes' observation and deduction in this case. We are mostly in conversation with Mary Sutherland, but it is the attention to detail that leads Holmes to the answer. While the story seems straightforward, he sees patterns and makes connections that others may overlook.

On the other hand, I would like to highlight something about Holmes in this short

story. While he aims to solve mysteries, his emotions towards Sutherland's distress differ from "*A Scandal in Bohemia*" and other cases he is assigned to. For example, in conversation after the departure of Sutherland, Holmes says to Watson, "Quite an interesting study, that maiden... I found her more interesting than her little problem... But the maiden herself was most instructive." His approach is not a complete altercation, but there is a different side of his character that readers can appreciate, along with the usual showcase of analytical thinking. Watson is still slightly surprised by his companion's take on the woman and comments, to which the detective responds with "Not invisible but unnoticed..." I perceive this outlook on the occurrence as an eye-opener, but also a reminder. Though Holmes appears to be lowering his guard, emotionally, he does not position himself to be taken advantage of. There is always a goal for educating the mind and advancing in peculiar areas.

"His Last Bow" (1917)

Despite mainly reading in Watson's eyes, there is a moment where perspective shifts. In the short story, "*His Last Bow*," the intended finale of the entire story, Doyle writes in the third person instead. In addition, it is meant to be a spy story in place of the detective mystery we already encounter. There is an emphasis on espionage and political stands as it reflects the cultural landscape shifting of the early 20th century. The detective

is older in this setting and retired until he returns to assist the British government. Although this short story concludes the adventures Holmes and Watson experienced, we are reminded of how influential the detective had on detective literature.

An interesting thing to note within the short stories of the infamous fictional detective is the point of view. Readers are mostly from the perspective of his closest friend, Dr. Watson, who watches Holmes amid his cases. There is a balance between narration and dialogue, and it is important to recognize who is observing who in each scenario. Watson typically oversees Holmes, but without diving deep into the detective's level of thinking. Although Doyle writes from his perspective, he resembles that of readers- a bystander, wondering how the detective will assess the crime and take action. This matter can lead back to addiction and isolation. Could this be a reflection of readers in reality? Perhaps, there are moments when we are too close or too involved in something that could weigh on us. Their conversations are put into the context of a solid, bonded friendship. Holmes invites Watson to get his opinion of a witness or victim, and if Watson overlooks something or underestimates his attention is brought to the main hint. He views Sherlock Holmes as means of admiration and respect.

Arthur Conan Doyle's decision to write this short story in the third person revolves around several reasons. One can argue the author's decision is a mystery within the genre itself. An entertaining element where readers can follow along, and question the ways and ideology of the intellectual detective. If the author wrote from Holmes' perspective, sequences are "easily" predicted. In addition to that, the use of the third-person perspective gives the author more freedom to explore their characters and

plot with more depth without being restricted by a first-person narrator. By using a more distant narrative voice, there is this sense of Doyle stepping back from the realism of Sherlock Holmes, bringing the character's story to a close. Through this, there is still a sense of mystery. Even though characters cannot exist in the "real," writers can choose how to illustrate their characters, choosing when to reveal certain things or traits. I would like to argue that we as an audience are not supposed to know everything about Holmes. Some aspects about him should remain a mystery within his line of work as a detective and because of that the scale of identity carries in a constant loop of inquiry. This could be a matter that circles back to the question of "why?" as we face the detectives' will and desire.

Psychological Analysis

One psychologist who has created and studied the stages of development is Erik Erikson, who articulated the idea that psychosocial development emphasizes the importance of social relationships, broken down into eight stages from infancy to adulthood. It is significant to note his research because we can recognize how we are developed as we grow older, not only physically vs. mentally, but in solo vs. social settings. During the adolescent stage, Erikson explains the notion of Identity vs. Identity confusion. Essentially, those around the ages of 13-19 experience growth. Adolescent rebellion in a quest for identity is seen as a source of cultural rejuvenation where strength includes fidelity. Identity is the integration of previous identification and self-images including negative ones while Identity Confusion fails to integrate previous

identifications. The latter is unsure about what role a person may play in the future, which I can connect to Sherlock Holmes. The basis for Erikson's theory is the potential struggle people face if they do not navigate their lives successfully, leading to overwhelming stress. Sherlock Holmes, his main interest is in the detective field. Aside from books and science, we do not encounter other interests that remove critical thinking involvement. This can be seen as a form of identity confusion since he appears to have tunnel vision for the one interest that keeps him entertained. It is an interesting parallel to consider even if the idea is not completely concise. The character's intense focus on his work, combined with constant effort for solving mysteries, suggests- not only obsession- his struggle to find a purpose, an alternative one, and identity in life.

Though we all share that similar feeling of growing up and exploring or learning different things, the experiences we encounter differ. As children, we are not ready to make decisions on our own, we rely on our parents to help guide us. Despite the normal mistakes in between, they shape us into the person we choose to become later on in life. While one may not think that far ahead, it is clear that eventually, those choices will happen. Some positive outcomes and some negative benefits socially and hinders emotionally, either way, the experience is what makes a being who they are. Identity allows us to be aware of ourselves as human beings and amidst social groups. While one may comment further that this subject tailors to the outsiders' perception of us, I intend to focus on a person's perception of themselves. If we can recall Sigmund Freud's view on personality structure, the superego is rather too strong. This introjection suppressing the needs of the pleasure principle, ID, leads to anxiety. With that, any signs of driven

behavior show perfectionism in comparison to a balanced structure, which would perform a positive effect. Finding the balance with all the principles can demonstrate an improvement. Therefore, the conscious and unconscious can satisfy demanding impulses realistically, determining whether actions are beneficial or not and minimizing any hints of anxiety.

As a collective, we learn from one another along with external sources which aid in finding our individual qualities. Researchers in the past have paved the way for psychology, allowing their discoveries to paint an in-depth meaning of personalities. While everyone is diverse, there are similar characteristics that many people share. It is because of those similarities that one can have an understanding of various personas. A person's structure, how they carry themselves, their strengths and weaknesses, and theories made benefit our knowledge. Psychologists like Erikson and Freud, focus on protecting the self as a form of insight and growth. There are psychological blockages that prevent one's development, many of which stem from parents or guardians. For a person to have normal development, they have to experience a form of respect, love, and discipline. Without that balance, children grow up with signs of basic hostility and anxiety. We can consider how to protect the "Self" and recognize when our actions are too impulsive or too logical. According to the findings of Bhaskar, Moll notes that "Mind is the real or constructed (as one's perspective would have it) object of investigation..." and what would happen if the mind were to undergo a darker "awakening" depiction. In addition to that idea, "the social world consists of two categorically different kinds of things, persons and societies." The importance behind this is to relay "a psychological

distinction between the internal and the external” (Brill 52). To conclude this idea, I would like to echo a claim made in the chapter with C. Auguste Dupin. I discussed a case of two entities with himself, essentially he and the narrator are in connection, but in this case with Moll’s findings and comparing that to Sherlock Holmes both entities rely on reason, it is just a matter of the purpose behind the reason that creates this distinction. This can be supported by the text, where Moll continues, “... thought and extension are two attributes of the same substance- they are not two different things, but two different expressions of the same thing.” To conclude, when it comes to the Mind concerning Sherlock Holmes, one has to consider the detective's relationship with empathy, social cognition, and other aspects that support the understanding of human psychology. In connection to literature, one should also acknowledge the key to solving complex and revelations of the truth.

Chapter 3: “And I believe somehow that I could live through this bad dream”

In addition to detective literature, psychological realism can be shown through filmic adaptations. My intent for this chapter is to analyze the particular way the late 20th-century filmic adaptation of Walter Mosley's *“Devil in a Blue Dress”* (1990) chooses to continue ideas of psychological realism that stem from 19th-century traditions of Poe and Doyle. Both Mosley and the director of the film, Carl Franklin, illustrate how different factors can motivate a person. Regardless if they are beneficial or not, the right amount of encouragement can persuade someone. The premise of the film is that Ezekial Rawlins needs money to take care of the average person's essentials: rent, clothes, food, etc. However, when an opportunity presents itself in front of him and events shift around, his motive suddenly changes. It does not mean the initial intent weighs less, but a matter of immediate priority. With the use of “impossible rooms,” technicolor, and the breach of desire/fantasy, I will explain how this noir mystery unfolds a character who does not realize they are meant for more until faced with dire circumstances.

There are several ways film can convey emotion. Similar to literary texts, we can encounter different components integrated into the film. Think of the decisions directors make when it comes to the material needed for each scene. Whether the intentions are for the characters or the audience to look inwards, there are moments led open for interpretation. The director's portrayal is unique, allowing others to be objective with

hopes of a possible response. It teaches us to look beyond what is shown and bend the “typical” standards to represent a different meaning of perspective. One can see how this coincides with a writer, who also makes careful selections to develop a story. To reiterate, the presentation of a director’s choice shows various ideas- one which reflects on the previous argument I made: analytical vs. imaginative. For this section, I will mention the means of desire and fantasy. This mirrors my purpose of demonstrating how characters use coping mechanisms to suppress what they truly yearn for.

What can a film demonstrate in comparison to literature? For one thing, words on paper are vividly brought to life for people to see exactly how these characters react to their situations. The raw emotion is showcased on a screen rather than a narrator describing the turn of events. However, combining passion and narrative brings an alternative to this, which occurs in *“Devil in a Blue Dress.”* Rawlins narrates throughout the film, contemplating conversations with people and his mental state with what he has to manage. To tell the story of his characters, Franklin needs the fragments and we as the audience put them together through our analysis. According to the article written by Carl Richardson, he describes the motion of realism by stating, “The use of the term ‘realism’ poses some very knotty problems that would take space at least equal to the size of another book to resolve...” Richardson then expresses this by quoting French film critic, Andre Bazin, who, “proposed between ‘the aesthetic’ and ‘the psychological.’” As things progressed in film and literature, aesthetic realism shifted to psychological realism. Bazin explains that despite this, ‘aesthetic realism’ is the ‘true realism’” (Richardson). The text

quotes the artist who says, “the need... to give significant expression to the world both concretely and [in] essence.” In relation to film, it allows a great deal of perspective for audiences, affecting how stories convey.

When one thinks of the notion between desire and fantasy, audiences take into account matters of brief contentment. Characters yearn for something, and yet the “want” only lasts for a moment. They revert to reality, facing the problem they originally crave to escape from. Whether discerned in books or films, we come across the inevitable truth of what temporary happiness is through these instances of fantasy and desire. For instance, people around the neighborhood are aware that Rawlins has a house, but needs a steady job to keep up the mortgage. His supposed companion who runs a bar, Joppy, offered him a job. In hindsight, perhaps looking into this position from a more clear lens would have helped Rawlins, but his happiness surrounded his home so intrusive thoughts were not a factor. With the filmic adaptation of “*Devil in a Blue Dress*,” we can recognize three themes. The first is technicolor, which allows the production of motion pictures to be expressed distinctly through color cinematography. An important thing to note is that technicolor does not give an image of reality. The choice of a specific color scheme can illustrate surrealism, but not close to the actual. In this case with “*Devil in a Blue Dress*,” red and blue are exhibited with moments of black as well. Focusing on the first two colors, red can be perceived as fictional whereas blue is reality. Fictional portray aggression, sexuality, and escapism; reality represents “lost,” present being, and vulnerability. The two aid in developing Ezekial Rawlins’ character and, at times, demonstrate parallelism. According to Carl Richardson, he explains in his article, “Film

noirs were not just stories, but stories that retrospectively solidify into a fairly coherent philosophy. This philosophy dealt with a world that was unmovielike, where the hero didn't always wind up with a girl, and was sometimes better off if he didn't..." This quote connects to Rawlins and who he exchanged with. We are introduced to two women in the film when one color is primarily focused on. Rawlins encounters Coretta at the Jazz Club, where red technicolor is heavily implemented. When he finally meets Daphne, blue is the focal point. Right away, we are met with an attraction- at the very least, it is evident from Rawlins' perspective. Daphne is a temptress so her display of sexuality is something she does not avert from. There could be a further analysis of roleplay and fantasy in terms of performance. Usually presented is a male seeker, who attempts to find answers to their problems and/or someone else's circumstance they become involved in. Besides the male is the woman who holds secret, undisclosed information that the male cannot help but desperately figure out. Just like in this instance with Daphne, sexuality is introduced to lure and endanger the male character. Although this does not happen every time in the film, it is interesting to see just how attraction is portrayed. Especially given the contrast with Rawlins's relationship with Coretta.

Despite the color contrast, we as the audience recognize that the world is dictated by their fantasies. I became curious about Daphne in conjunction with the title. If blue symbolizes the vulnerability of the real, I question Mosley's choice of giving Daphne a blue dress. To analyze this further, I first would like to point out another difference between the two ladies of the plot. While both women occasionally assist a male individual, Coretta's decision in disclosing herself correlates to escapism. Her occupation

would have been at stake, and considering that she is a Black woman it is difficult to come across employment. In comparison to Daphne, her decision resembles vulnerability. Her reputation with the public would have been tampered with, so she had to go along with the false rumors circling her, Frank, and Carter. To link the question of choice, my idea is that reality is the devil in disguise. Going back to Richardson's text, he also states, "It addressed a slew of feelings, human conditions, and predicaments that seemed at first to have no business on the screen... it also dealt with the alarm and growth of resignation, suddenly cropping up in a dynamic land of opportunity... film noir rendered this bleak situation in an elaborate, artistic fashion, somewhat softening the blow." This could resemble the notion of "aesthetic realism" in which it describes the nature of reality itself unfolds as well as among the self and art. The author then adds, "But by doing so, film noir in effect underscores the difficulties Americans experience and having to give up unrealizable dreams' deference to harsh truths." Daphne finally reveals a glimpse of her actual self, a woman constantly frightened of how others will perceive her due to her ethnic background. As much as she wants to break out of it, repression only makes it more difficult. It leads to the death of her close friend, Coretta, and covering up outsiders' rumors of a romance with Frank, when in actuality he is her half-brother.

This goes back to the idea of fantasy vs. reality. Director Franklin utilizes colors and images to develop the story and his characters. His in-depth illustration ties in the different perspectives of both Coretta and Daphne, which may not be so different after all. There could be an interpretation of likeness. I can argue this with how they both leave Rawlins' life. With Coretta, they only have one intimate moment, but that instance brings

him closer to her- desiring her more. It is only until her death is revealed that the actual sets in as sequences of events unfold. Mirroring that with Daphne, she allures Rawlins even though they never kiss. It is a fantasy of something in front of a person, but still out of their reach. Either way, he feels the need to protect her, and once her secret is revealed there is a moment of sympathy. Guilty enough that towards the end of the, he drives over to return the money reward. However, she moved out with her brother Frank. Up until her departure, there are still remnants of ideal (fantasy). From there, the actuality of life sets back in for Rawlins, and in the back of his mind going down this road, continuing to rely on his fantasy, in turn escaping through the use of coping mechanisms, would lead to his demise. To tell the story of his characters, he needs the fragments and we as the audience put them together through our analysis.

Furthermore, I would like to circle back to desire/fantasy and analytical/imaginative. We are aware that dreams and fantasies do not last, however, as the audience, we find a way to make them last and understand the purpose of certain objects and rooms. It is similar to how detectives rely on their coping mechanisms, fleeing from their problems for moments of happiness. This reverts to breakdowns through narrative malfunctions. Driven by stories and the beauty of images, there is such a revelation for us as well as the characters. Another element in the film I would like to highlight is the manifestation of entrapment. The audience listens or watches closely to characters as some instrument of discovery reveals itself. Similar to how filmmaker and actor, David Lynch, specializes in sound to emphasize manifestation, Carl Franklin chooses to sound when Rawlins finds himself trapped in an “Impossible Room.” The

term means spaces that do not exist. They may exist for the audience to observe, but they serve as a “strange” occurrence for the characters. This could also tie in with “Impossible Objects” where distortion happens in uncommon objects, but this persistent exploration appears in rooms more. Think for instance of lodges and hotels. In the example of “Devil in a Blue Dress,” specifically after Coretta’s death, Rawlins attempts to sleep, but battles a nightmare. We can hear Coretta’s voice during their last conversation together along with the ticking of the clock. It continues as a crescendo and abruptly interrupts his sleep. Referring back to associating narratives with “escapism,” Rawlins’ story takes off on its own due to these sequences of events. The discovery from the “Impossible Room” unveiled something, the need to solve this mystery and avenge Coretta, and clear his name. Moreover, “Impossible Rooms” take place within his car as well. We are introduced to close-ups, focusing on Rawlins’ eyes as they blend in with the dark background. The interior monologue plays out and we are left to question whether Rawlins is trapped in the “Impossible Room” or the audience examining the scene.

Recalling Richardson’s article, I would like to continue the notion of aesthetic beauty. Although the artist speaks greatly on realism in general and about his findings within filming, I can find a connection to psychological realism also. Richardson says, about André Bazin, “Bazin called the latter, ‘psychological realism,’ counterfeit. It is ‘the pseudorealism of a deception aimed at fooling the eye (or for that matter of the mind).’ Psychological realism lulls the spectator into an unquestioning, mindless state of passivity, as do sedentary theories of art that appeal to psychology for authority.” His take on “aesthetic realism” seems to be similar to “the pseudorealism of a deception aimed at

fooling the eye,” yet Bazin “sought to educate the spectator, bestowing upon him an appreciation for aesthetic realism, which the spectator, in turn, should demand of the filmmaker.” Based on these quotes, aesthetic realism can provide a deeper understanding of the world by presenting conflicting ideas in a way that is both beautiful and genuine. One principle of this with filmmaking is the use of contrasting elements, such as technicolor, for visuals to reflect conflict and the overall theme of the plot. Despite the term deriving from a philosophical element, there is also a link to psychological realism. The aesthetic represents the real and though there is an art of beauty, it does not deviate to the point of artificial or theatrical. I argue its purpose is to let an audience acknowledge beauty for its entirety, which could mean the “standard” or cruel. This goes back to the interpretation of Hardboiled detective fiction and the display of setting and characters. The violence, complexity within individuals, and grim desire are components that are *real*.

Chapter 4: Midtown Carpenter in Red

What are you thinking about?

Alana Brooke has spent the past couple of hours at her table, not saying much but straightening herself up. Fixing the corners of her turtleneck, the buttons of her cardigan, and forcing a smile.

Completely oblivious to my presence.

The young woman stuck a hand in her pocket, taking out her blue hand mirror. Her facial expression remained normal and stoic as she angled her head in a few directions. I kept glancing over, this familiar sense of fascination within me.

I had the privilege of working closely with Miss Brooke, one of the most accomplished detectives in New York. I simply saw myself as her assistant despite others who reminded me of my ethic in the field. I had potential, but Brooke's dedication made me realize I still had much to learn.

She was a woman with incredible ability- sometimes overwhelming upon first encounters. She had the tendency to people watch- without really watching them. I found that strange.

"I live for the reaction, Reese." She would often tell me.

I could not make sense of it.

She nearly froze, her eyes continuing to stare at the smaller reflection from the hand mirror. It was only until my face showed that she hitched her breath.

“You called me,” I said to her. “Is everything all right?” Her back remained to me with a gradual slouch.

“One of the officers brought in a file,” she motioned the ivory envelope on the table before closing her hand mirror.

I stepped over to her right to get a look at it. This involved our latest case, one I heard Miss Brooke barely wanted. She was never one to stray away from a case, but this instance in particular she barely wanted to lift a finger. I exchanged looks between the envelope and the distant woman, my neck tensing up from anticipation. I reached for the file when she spoke up.

“Louis Augustine, wealthy businessman in Austere Jewelers, late forties and a heck of a southpaw. Opened five stores in Manhattan, and planned on expanding somewhere in Italy. His family filed a missing person’s report after supposedly visiting him because of their late grandfather.” She gave a quick summary of our case as I nodded along. Both of us were aware of the situation. Naturally, she would know more than myself, being that I was just her assistant, but by the way she was leaning in her chair and sighing, admittedly I grew curious.

As I chose to not respond, she filled the silence, “That led to the Agustines hiring us to find him, and for the past month we’ve been working tirelessly, following and chasing dead leads.”

“Miss Brooke...”

Our eyes finally met as if to tell me, ‘I’m right, aren’t I?’

“I thought we tried almost everything,” her fingers brushing the top of the envelope until she pushed herself out of the chair. “But I think we’ll get our answers soon enough.”

If you asked me, it looked like she was bidding her last hope card on this.

Suddenly, there was a ring from the front door. Brooke waved her hand, gesturing for me to answer it. I walked over to open the door, revealing a woman a bit younger than the detective and myself. She was rather frail (though her attire did not emphasize that), with jet black hair ending at her neck. Her eyes softened upon seeing me, but the gaze quickly changed once she met Brooke.

“Let’s make this quick,” she rudely brushed past me.

“Charming as they said,” Brooke cackled before pointing at the light mark on the woman’s upper cheek. “What happened here?”

“My nail,” she flashed her long scarlet fingernails.

“Can you state your name for us?” The detective said, taking a seat on the couch. She made a motion for her to sit beside her, but the lady pulled a chair out with her right hand and sat down.

“I already told your buddies at the station, I’d rather not repeat myself.” The woman glared.

“It was more for my assistant, but never mind that.” A small smirk appeared on her face, “Ramona Hines. Now, which tombstone did you rob that name from?”

“Screw you,” Ramona scoffed. “That’s *my* name, plain and simple.”

That caused Brooke to laugh again, mumbling under her breath. “You were the last person to see Louis Augustine alive somewhere between January 10th to 14th, care to explain what happened?”

“Ugh, as I explained before... we bumped into each other before he headed out of the city.”

“Did he say where?”

“That man was always glued to the phone, he never got the chance to say.”

“So he was in a hurry?” I asked.

“You could say that.” Ramona snapped her neck at me.

“But he made time to see you.”

“People like him only make time to see money.” She sucked her teeth.

“So you owed him money?”

“Does it look like I owe anyone money?” She sized me up out of disgust, “I am a carpenter. He hired me to work on redesigning the layout in one of his stores in Midtown.”

Ramona rolled her eyes, turning away from me and giving her attention back to Miss Brooke. The witness folded her arms, giving the impression of annoyance, but she started to hug her sides. Tips of her scarlet nails clawing at her sleeves.

The living room became still, everyone watching one another like the start of a quick draw. Ramona could not stand how quiet it became, gripping her sleeves tightly and gritting her teeth. She shouted at us, demanding to know her situation here.

“Look, am I being arrested or are you going to keep interrogating me until dawn!?” She exclaimed.

"That depends if you help us here," I said.

“This is ridiculous. I’m about to call my lawyer-”

“Midtown carpenter in red.” Miss Brooke said.

“... what?” Even I was confused by that... nickname.

Miss Brooke stood up from the couch, strolling over to the table with the ivory envelope. “I knew someone who lived on 50th street. He was found dead two years ago. Ruled a suicide. 9mm to the jogger's temple. Familiar with the guy?”

"People are born and dying everyday. I can't keep up with them all." Ramona shrugged.

"That's a shame," she turned to face me with a sinister smile, "Remind me of Case File 49."

"Michael West." I responded almost immediately. That was one of the few cases that drew me to Miss Brooke. She was always acknowledged for her brilliance, however, 49 revealed a different side of the female detective- her failure. She was dropped from the case after ‘over analyzing’ the same details of the alleged suicide. Coming up with the conclusion that West was instead murdered, officers and the deceased's family would not let her hear the end of it. Thus, they thought it was best to pull Brooke from the case and sweep it under the rug. Everyone saw the clues lined up like a game of dominos, but she saw the entire thing sideways.

And so did I.

At the mention of West's name, Ramona adjusted her seated position.

"I didn't do it. What happened to Micheal at that time was a tragic suicide."

"I didn't say you did. It was just a name."

"What does this have to do with Mr. Augustine?"

"West and Augustine have competed for a while in the industry- I'm sure you are aware. About two years ago, West was granted the opportunity of a lifetime: a big offer that would have been more than enough for a new starter company out in southern Europe. Unfortunately, before things were finalized, the poor designer... died, leaving the offer to Augustine soon after. Not the first time officers were called to aid him. Heard he had a terrible back, Reese. She suddenly rambled on.

"Neck," Ramona quietly corrected, shaking her head. "Again, what does that have to-"

"Even more so!" She abruptly cuts in, "the last person West contacted... is the same person in front of us now, except they go by Hines now."

"Heh, so you think-"

"I don't think, young lady, I know." Brooke interjected sharply.

"You don't know a damn thing!" She stood up and almost stomped over to the detective's face until I stepped in.

"Then talk! Tell us, how are you familiar with both men?"

"Same reason Mr. Augustine reached out..."

"Seems convenient that he was killed- oh, excuse me, he *shot himself* just before finalizing plans."

“I didn’t do it. I didn’t do it. I... didn’t...” she kept repeating. “You don’t get it.”

“Then what are we missing? Help us understand.” I chimed in, ignoring Brooke’s irked expression at my approach.

Ramona just continued to ramble on that she did not do it. She rubbed the sides of her arms, her chest heaving as she paced. “Water,” she stammered, “water.” I was about to offer the woman something to drink when Miss Brooke snatched the envelope from the table and held it up to Ramona’s face.

“We are going on two months, Hines! If you don’t have anything helpful for us, he is going to die.”

“You don’t think I know that! I’m putting myself at risk just stepping foot in here!”

“You might as well dig your own grave or find a skeleton with a new name. Was this the plan? You keep Mr. Augustine off the grid until it becomes a cold case and run off together? Is that why you two covered up the death of Micheal West?”

The two women sent daggers to each other, but surprisingly Ramona held back. She scoffed, dismissing the claims Miss Brooke made.

“Maybe you don’t owe anyone money, but you like the idea of it. All of it. And that’s why Louis raised his right hand- shot Micheal, not only to have the offer of his dreams, but you with him as well.”

I stood there, unsure who to stop. Ramona’s eyes went wide, her lips quivered as she struggled to respond to Brooke. All the woman did was step back, almost tripping

over the chair she sat in, faltering with her words.

“He did it... Mr. Augustine.” She managed to say, “He staged Micheal’s death as a suicide, but he was there alone. He needed a way out, so he used me as an alibi before leaving Manhattan.”

She started to tremble and held onto the chair in order to keep her balance. I offered her my arm for assistance, but she waved me off. The demeanor she had now versus her arrival was quite different. The witness, now accomplice, hung her head in defeat. She cursed herself for letting her guard down like this, knowing what this meant for Louis Augustine. She tried to backtrack, but the damage was already done. Shortly after, Ramona raised her head and looked at Miss Brooke.

“I don’t know where he is.” She said and somehow we had a feeling she was telling the truth. Neither of us said a word as she made her way to the door. She slowly opened it and with one foot out her last words to the detective were: “He never wanted me with him.”

With that, Ramona Hines left. I was speechless, watching as the door closed. Glancing over at Miss Brooke, I waited for her next instructions. But she was motionless as I was, staring at the door. It did not take long for her to shake off that feeling, swiftly turning around and gazing at the file once more.

Reese...

What are you thinking about?

"Was," I started, clearing my throat. "Was she telling the truth?"

“Completely? Probably not... but I do believe she doesn't know where Augustine is. I thought he had feelings for the girl, but now I know she only saw him and he saw a way out.”

There was the hand mirror again. The small reflective object captured a quarter of Alana's face. The conversation replayed in her mind like a metronome, figuring out her next move. She fixed the corners of her turtleneck, the buttons of her cardigan and forced a smile.

Completely oblivious that she was alone.

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