

When the Song of the Angels Is Stilled: A Before Watson Novel

A. S. Croyle

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This rich, evocative taste of the famous detective's past will delight fans of Doyle's work.

This innovative adaptation pits Sherlock Holmes against the baby-farming industry in nineteenth-century England. As Sherlock investigates the ritualistic murders of helpless infants, he struggles with conflicting emotions of young love in A. S. Croyle's *When the Song of the Angels Is Stilled*.

For those who wonder what this notorious character may have experienced before Dr. Watson came along, Poppy Stamford will tell you. "I did feel badly for Sherlock Holmes for he lived in an insecure place, a dark place. Somehow I knew instinctively that he was deeply suffused with both sadness and genius."

Narrated from this inquisitive heroine's viewpoint and told in retrospect, the novel explores aspects of Sherlock's personality that Sir Arthur Conan Doyle may have neglected to reveal in his original series. Steeped in the flavor of the time in which he lived, this rich, evocative taste of the famous detective's past will delight fans of Doyle's work. Croyle remains true to her predecessor's style, but stays within her own boundaries as she allows Sherlock's girlfriend to tell the story.

His eyes glazed over, dream-like, but his fingers, long and pale, continued to move in a perpetually nervous fashion, as if he were fingering the strings of a violin. I realized that the pain medication was taking hold and might be the source of his rambling because he did not seem the type to confide in a woman, especially one he hardly knew.

Quite apparent is the research that must have preceded writing this book, for the historical authenticity could not have been achieved without immersion. The pacing is slow, meticulous, and painstakingly realistic, while the life-or-death plot is backed by the sense of urgency needed to turn this entertaining yarn into a page-turner. Historical figures such as Oscar Wilde make an appearance, adding interest to the popular setting.

A strong aptitude for language and careful editing, along with a sophisticated method of presentation, raises this polished mystery well above the level of mediocrity. Croyle's work shows potential for an individual idea, perhaps even a fresh, new series fashioned from scratch. This is not to imply that there is anything inherently flawed in an adaptation based on a famous author's concept, but the fact remains that this novel is highly derivative.

A. S. Croyle is an attorney with a passion for history and romance. Her background in law has provided a solid foundation for investigative fiction, incorporating the logic and practicality necessary to probe the criminal underworld in an organized manner.

The gritty crimes committed behind the scenes in this riveting tale are a sharp contrast to the gentle affection between Sherlock and Poppy. Their touching and tender relationship lends a unique perspective to the standout, world-renowned protagonist. For anyone in love with Sherlock Holmes, this story must be savored, not merely read.

JULIA ANN CHARPENTIER (April 12, 2015)

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