

– Sorting Sherlock

John Watson: *We don't know a thing about each other. I don't know where we're meeting. I don't even know your name.*

(Music returns)

Sherlock Holmes: *I know you're an army doctor and you've been invalidated home from Afghanistan. I know you've got a brother who's worried about you, but you won't go to him for help because you don't approve of him—possibly because he's an alcoholic, more likely because he recently walked out on his wife. And I know that your therapist thinks your limp's psychosomatic, quite correctly I'm afraid. That's enough to be going on with, don't you think?*

(Music rises)

Shannon: Alright and welcome to the Sorting Sherlock roundtable and today we're going to be sorting Sherlock's nemesis, Moriarty. This is Shannon and I'm identifying here as a Slytherin. I'm joined by:

Rachael: Rachael and I'm a very proud Gryffindor.

[Laughter]

Drinkingcocoa: I'm Drinkingcocoa. I'm a Ravenclaw.

Queen: And I'm The Queen of Hearts and I'm a Slytherin.

Shannon: Excellent. So like before, we have no Hufflepuffs among us, but we'll get started anyway. The first question I have – let me read it here. On the rooftop of Bart's, Moriarty says to Sherlock, “You need me or you're nothing. Because we're just alike, you and I. Except you're boring.” Do you believe this is true, especially with respect to the different houses they would have been sorted into?

Rachael: Yes! And I think this is great evidence for the proposition that Sherlock and Moriarty need to be sorted into different houses. The qualities that sort them differently – the influence the line that makes this distinction. Now, I wasn't around for the Sorting Sherlock round-table and I won't reopen that discussion, but my position is that Sherlock is a Ravenclaw and that Moriarty is a Gryffindor. Both of them clearly are highly intelligent people. They also kind of march the beat of a different drummer. Sometimes they don't always have strong personal relationships with others. They're sort of more about the game and the puzzle solving then they are forming deep emotional bonds with people. Where I think they differ, Sherlock, as Moriarty said, is on the side of the angels. He has certain lines that he won't cross. I had a friend that compared – she made a really apt comparison, and this is vividhoney on Livejournal – comparing Sherlock and Moriarty to Batman and Joker in the Dark Knight.

[*Murmurs of agreement*]

Rachael: That kind of Heath Ledger, chaotic version of Joker. Many of the same characteristics, but why I think Moriarty is different is that Moriarty craves this drama and risk taking and impulsiveness and brashness that Sherlock doesn't. He's very wrapped up in that and I think that is because he's a Gryffindor and Gryffindors are dramatic people.

[*Laughter*]

Drinkingcocoa: I agree with a lot of it. Some of it I disagree with because I think Moriarty's crazy.

[*Laughter*]

Queen: And perfect.

Rachael: Crazy and perfect.

[*Laughter*]

Drinkingcocoa: But I understand his point. I think they are just alike in that I think they're both Ravenclaws, meaning that the thing that makes them both feel most alive is mental stimulation. I think that's what they crave and what they live for. I think, "You need me" is something that Moriarty wishes were still true. I think that was true of Sherlock in season one and not in season two. I think "You are nothing" is true in that if Sherlock is no longer extraordinary, but ordinary because he cares for other people. He has bonds. He has a loving friendship with John. I think that turns him into something that is "nothing" in Moriarty's eyes.

But I think that turns against Moriarty in the same way that love is the force that will conquer Voldemort because he undervalues it. "Except you're boring," is the part I find most interesting because my understanding of the word "boring" and "bored" in the Sherlock universe is that it's a synonym for lonely. I think that when you're as smart as Sherlock or Moriarty, then when the people around you fail to keep up with you, it's like being abandoned by them and it's very bewildering when all the rest of humanity acts different, thinks different from the way you do.

By becoming somebody who loves John, who has formed a human bond, Sherlock has become one of the people who bores Moriarty, who abandons him. This is the conflict I think Moriarty is having on the roof of St. Bart's – is he going to be able to retain Sherlock's interest in him, keep him as one of the freaks that can't form human bonds? Or is Sherlock just going to turn out to be ordinary like everybody else?

I think though, the Ravenclaw bit, I think Ravenclaw is an amoral house. That it's about the mental stimulation, whether you have bonds or not, whether you are for good or for evil, I think that element does remain the same. It's that Moriarty is just now discovering being that brilliant doesn't necessarily mean being cut off from other people.

Queen: I sorted Sherlock in Ravenclaw last time and I think Moriarty could be a Ravenclaw, but I think he's more ambitious than Sherlock and he uses his brain to his distinct advantage. Even when the advantage is just to cause trouble. Sherlock uses his brain to be seen as clever. I mean it really depends, but Moriarty is like Sherlock next level. Sherlock more ambitious. They're very similar. I think he's right that they're alike in a lot of ways. But Moriarty has more drive to get what he wants, where Sherlock doesn't see things the same way.

Rachael: I'm not sure if Moriarty has more drive. There's just a line that Moriarty will cross that Sherlock won't.

Shannon: Really? You don't think he has more drive?

Queen: No, no, I agree with that. That's a better way of saying it.

Rachael: I think that they're both driven, but that Moriarty is willing to do things that will hurt people. He's willing to do things that are highly illegal and highly dangerous. He's a risk taker, an adrenaline junkie, and I think that's why he's a Gryffindor.

[*Laughter*]

Rachael: Sherlock is a little bit more calculated. He cares more, you know? And that's exactly why, what Drinkingcocoa was saying, I think Moriarty's a little bit jealous of that. At least what he sees with John.

Shannon: See, I was thinking about the ambition question just based on this discussion cause I had other things I made note of that I thought made them quite different, but Sherlock's drug use and history – I mean, granted we don't see what sort of history Moriarty had. Maybe he also had a history of drug use, but I see when you bring it around to the bored/boredom issue and the ambition issue, Sherlock tried to alleviate boredom through mind-altering substances. I guess maybe we can see, like Cocoa had said, he's formed a relationship. That's something else that's alleviating his boredom. That's more internal looking. You know, you look inside the self and you solve your problem alone. You cure your boredom in isolation. You take drugs by yourself. It's a very solitary activity.

Whereas I think Moriarty is at the center of this web, which entails the managing of a lot of people, accumulating knowledge about a lot of people for the purpose of controlling them and maybe he is indeed bored. But his way of alleviating his boredom speaks to a distinction that would lead to house differences in them. So I would say both get bored. Both like this game when they play with each other. They're both not ordinary. They're both extraordinary and they crave recognition in some way. They're both cunning and manipulative and this all starting to sound a bit Slytherin of both of them. But I would say Jim needs to be at the center, needs to be networked in a collective, even if it's not friends. He needs favors much more. He seeks out Sherlock's attention. Sherlock didn't seek him out, but he seeks this out in a way that I think makes him more part of a collective mindset where Sherlock is more isolationist.

There's an old piece of meta I read way back, which I wish I could reference correctly, that talked about parallels and differences between the houses on the level of collective houses, houses where you see the house members act in a way that's very protective of their members and very collective. Versus independent houses where the members are kind of isolated and on their own. The two collective houses were Slytherin and Hufflepuff and I would say that Moriarty doesn't come out much as Hufflepuff here.

[*Laughter*]

Shannon: But he does fit into this collective, watch your back, manipulate people to do – you know, very Slughorn in some sense, but not so benevolently. To have people looking after you. Whereas with Gryffindor and Ravenclaw are much more isolated. That's where you have the independent hero who needs to learn to trust friends, kind of like Sherlock. So that sounds a little bit like Gryffindor that Rachael is saying. But we see this in Ravenclaw as well. Luna's a great example of how kind of isolated we could see the individual Ravenclaw being. They don't come together as a house as much. So I would say that sorting, I would put Sherlock into the Ravenclaw and Moriarty into the Slytherin based on that distinction.

Rachael: So I definitely see the Slytherin argument there if you view Moriarty's reason for surrounding himself with those people to be solely motivated by power and ambition. But if you're going to take a little bit of a wooby Moriarty perspective and think that maybe that's how he avoids feeling lonely, is to do these incredibly risky things and hang out with these incredibly dangerous people who don't otherwise have lots of friends. That's my Gryffindor argument for why he surrounds himself with those individuals. It's not to have power over them. It's because he thinks those people will be his friends and those people like doing the incredibly crazy dangerous illegal things that he does as well.

Shannon: So I'm going to move us into our next question: What house qualities, if any, influence Moriarty's decision to lead a life of crime and chaos? What do you guys think?

Queen: Well because I'm a huge wizard rock fan and also because I think he's a Slytherin, I think the band Draco & The Malfoys [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Draco_and_the_Malfoys] puts it well in their

song *Slytherin Pride* when they say “We're cunning and ambitious and we like to play vicious.” So I think he's cunning and ambitious but I also think he's willing to do anything to – to go to any point to get what he wants, which is a Slytherin quality. He would even become a consulting criminal. He would do anything, which is a Slytherin quality.

Drinkingcocoa: I think what led him to a life of crime and chaos is that he is a Ravenclaw. It is that he's constantly seeking distractions. He says all his life, he's been looking for distractions, to keep his mind occupied and that's why he's a consulting criminal. He doesn't himself have any crimes he wants to commit particularly. He is happy to have other people give him their crimes to commit as long as he can distract himself. That is why he can even pull off the greatest crimes of breaking into the Tower of London and not be satisfied.

Because it wasn't about the power or the money. Sherlock says to him “You don't want power or money, not really. What is it all for?” He says “I'm going to solve the problem. Our problem. The final problem.” Which to me sounds like a Ravenclaw problem and not a Slytherin problem. What he wants to know is what can motivate him to stay alive? I think it's mental stimulation that makes life bearable for him. Otherwise power and money would do and he has as much of that as he needs. That's why he doesn't want. That's why he didn't take it.

Rachael: I agree that power and money are not what Moriarty's after, but instead of cerebral stimulation, I argue that Moriarty's in it for a little bit of a rush. When I picture Moriarty getting sorted, I picture kind of a similar debate with the Sorting Hat that went on with Hermione. We know that when she wore the Hat, it kind of gave her a choice between Ravenclaw and Gryffindor. It saw both of those as being a potential for her.

She chose Gryffindor and I think the reason why she chose it was because she wanted to be involved in that adventure that was part of being Harry Potter's sidekick, part of being in the trio throughout all of this drama for Harry. She craved that and craved that adventure. I think Moriarty's the same way. He craves drama. He craves passion. He craves not just the puzzle but the risk-taking involved in it.

People always associate Gryffindors with being brave. That's sort of the quintessential house quality, but if you actually look at how they're described, it's “courage as well as daring, nerve and chivalry.” I won't argue that Moriarty is chivalrous at all but you can't see a character in *Sherlock* that's more daring and has more nerve than he does. They're also described as “brave to the point of being reckless” and he's pretty much the most reckless and chaotic character there. I'm going to argue that if there is such a thing as an evil Gryffindor, it's Moriarty.

Queen: Yeah.

Shannon: Excellent.

Drinkingcocoa: The other Ravenclaw quality I saw in him was that he is trying to get Sherlock's attention because he thinks of Sherlock as his mirror. That's something that I got from ???? a fanfic writer who wrote Touchstones and writes in the Harry Potter fandom.

Rachael: Great fic, by the way.

Drinkingcocoa: What Sherlock says to John in *A Study in Pink* is that “genius requires an audience.” I'm thinking that the Carl Powers murder, while I doubt that it was Moriarty's first crime, it was the first time that he knew that somebody else, this other boy – this case made Sherlock's name. He knew somebody else saw him, saw his cleverness and that made me think he's found the audience that his genius requires. It made me wonder if Moriarty went into business as a consulting criminal to match Sherlock's career as a consulting detective because he wanted to position himself always to get Sherlock's attention, his audience.

[*Laughter*]

Rachael: The more I think about this question, about why Moriarty's a criminal, it's the strongest support for Moriarty being a Gryffindor. The difference between Sherlock and Moriarty, or one of them at least, is Moriarty's disregard for rules. Sherlock disregards some rules but there's a line that Moriarty will cross continuously that involves hurting people, you know doing severely illegal things that Sherlock refuses to cross. There is no other *Harry Potter* house that is recognized as being the rule breaking house. I mean, Gryffindor is the house with The Marauders, sneaking around at night.

[*Laughter*]

Rachael: It's bad boy Sirius Black's house. It is completely –

Shannon: The Weasley twins.

Rachael: It's the house that says “I'm too good to follow these rules. These rules don't apply to me because I'm not ordinary.”

[*Laughter*]

Rachael: I totally see Moriarty spouting that.

Queen: I think that doing anything to reach your goal is a Slytherin quality though. “Or perhaps in Slytherin, you'll meet your real friends. Those cunning folk use any means to achieve their ends.” That's the Slytherin line. So I don't know. I think that's more Slytherin than Gryffindor.

Shannon: Is one of the house qualities for Slytherin ambition?

Queen: Yeah.

Shannon: I come across that a lot. I think on the one hand, I'm thinking here, I can understand the arguments being raised for both Ravenclaw and for Gryffindor. But when I think about Moriarty and I think about ambition – I was consulting that great resource, Wikipedia, and then I was also checking dictionary.com like “What is ambition?”

[Laughter]

Rachael: It's a great resource.

Shannon: Yeah, don't do this at home kids. But ambition is defined in different ways, but it seems to be it deals with desire for some type of achievement or distinction: power, honor, fame, wealth and the willingness to strive for its attainment. But I think when you have ambition, you're also very dissatisfied. That's part of what drives ambitious people, is never being satisfied. I think Moriarty's boredom – I mean, he is very powerful. He continues to attain things, control wealth, influence, killing people, getting Sherlock's attention. But he is still dissatisfied. So I almost feel like he's driven by the worse part of ambition, one that can never be fulfilled. I see him as Slytherin here. I can see that as driving his crime.

Rachael: I definitely do see the ambition, but I also see it as why is he ambitious? What is he so dedicated to? I also just see it as a reckless disregard as much as trying to achieve something. In my mind, Moriarty's a little bit too chaotic and scrambled to really be a focused Slytherin with a goal. He's too scatter-brained.

[Laughter]

Rachael: He would never take good Hermione style notes either.

[Laughter]

Shannon: Are you guys ready for question three?

Queen: Yeah.

Shannon: Okay, so in this one, in her first meeting with Sherlock, Irene Adler says “Do you know the big problem with a disguise, Mr. Holmes? However hard you try, it's always a self-portrait.” In series one and two we encounter Moriarty in two disguises: the fumbling and awkward Jim in IT and the somewhat bashful actor Richard Brook. So what house qualities do these brief glimpses of Jim and Richard Brook reveal about Moriarty?

Queen: I think his disguises aren't reflections of Moriarty's identity, but they're reflections about what he dislikes about people. It's kind of weakness and Jim from IT, he thinks people who hide who they really are, maybe their sexuality – he thinks he's weak and he's not impressive. For Richard Brook, it's a similar story. Brook was supposedly paid by Sherlock, supposedly to play the villain, which he took because he needed the work. Moriarty looks down on anyone who answers to someone else which I think is a Slytherin quality. You know both of his characters, in their own way, are weak characters, who answer to someone maybe themselves for Jim from IT or who answers to Sherlock in Richard Brook and he looks down on that.

Rachael: I make the same argument with respect to the Gryffindor perspective, that Jim and Richard Brook both have qualities that a Gryffindor would not appreciate or are kind of opposite of a Gryffindor. They're both very timid. They're not self-centered. They're sort of the opposite, shadow of what Moriarty is.

Shannon: Would you guys then say that if we do accept the premise that these are a self-portrait, that there are some other house qualities that are being depicted through these characters, or do you reject that outright?

Rachael: I reject that outright. I reject Irene's comment that disguises are always a self-portrait. I think it sounds nice, but sometimes you need to adopt a disguise that serves a certain role and that's what he was doing. He needed something that would be under the radar and he also wanted something that would be emotionally jarring to Sherlock, to see him so different to how he really is.

[Agreement]

Rachael: So powerless, so timid, so shy.

Queen: I think it's a self-portrait of what he doesn't like, of what is the opposite of him.

Shannon: Maybe self-loathing though. Maybe those are parts of him that he hates in himself. He tries to cover with the greater part of him.

Queen: No, he's perfect.

Shannon: I was just thinking about –

[*Laughter*]

Shannon: Such a fangirl. A Moriarty fangirl.

[*Laughter*]

Shannon: I was thinking – and this draws a little bit upon what you hear about great lies and sometimes acting too – that great lies are convincing because they contain a modicum of truth. They're not too far from the truth. With acting, depending on the school of acting you go to, you may draw upon experiences to build a history in the character that you're projecting. So there is something there, whether it's something you read or something you experienced. There's some part of you you're channeling in your interpretation of that character.

So I wanted to say that for both Jim and Richard, they actually had something that I think they had in common. But the source of what they had in common was different and that goes back to the differences in house qualities I see. I think this is a part of Moriarty that we're seeing and that is both of them are desperate. There's this degree of desperation for each of them, but they're desperate for different things. So Jim in IT is desperate for recognition by Sherlock. He wants Sherlock's attention. Whereas Richard is desperate for being believed, his story being believed.

Rachael: He's also just desperate for work.

Shannon: Yes! That's a good point.

Rachael: The reason Richard takes the job to being with is because he's not cutting it as an actor.

Shannon: He needed the job, exactly. So he's desperate for work – yeah, Richard Brook – because he needed the work and now he's desperate to be believed. But Jim in IT is desperate for recognition from Sherlock. Sherlock is someone he values, someone who is potentially not ordinary, someone who's like

him. If genius needs to be admired, he's looking for that recognition from someone really high up. He wants recognition from the best and I would that's a kind of ambition that would derive from Slytherin.

Whereas Richard is desperate for more mundane things. He's desperate for employment and he's desperate that people like Kitty and John and others who are going to read the newspaper, believe his story. He wants acceptance and believability by normal people, ordinary people. He wants to be accepted by the normal people, by the greater group. That sounds very much like being included, being part of all the rest and that screams Hufflepuff to me.

[*Laughter*]

Rachael: This is my argument for why Moriarty is a Hufflepuff!

Shannon: This is the tiny thread of Hufflepuff in Moriarty.

Rachael: That you had to get to through Richard Brook.

Shannon: That's right and you can only see it through that disguise.

[*Laughter*]

Rachael: I love it.

Shannon: I spent hours on this, guys.

Rachael: And I think that's probably the best argument for Hufflepuff.

[*Laughter*]

Shannon: So let me bring us to our next question. What other aspects of Gryffindor, Hufflepuff, Ravenclaw or Slytherin do you see reflected in Moriarty that we haven't talked about here?

Queen: I have one for Hufflepuff.

Shannon: Okay! Good!

Queen: And this is really me grasping for something, but I think he's helpful to people. This is just one example, Irene Adler. Even if it was all part of his plan, he was willing to help her without asking for anything. So that's something a Hufflepuff would do.

[*Laughter*]

Queen: Right?

Shannon: Help a friend in need.

Queen: Help a friend in need, exactly.

Shannon: I definitely do see a lot of Ravenclaw in him. He's clever and well-learned. We see him showing off his knowledge of binary. He's able to go head to head with Sherlock when talking about Bach and recognizing the music he hears. He throws out puzzles left right and center that are meant to have slight clues. He's a master of puzzles that keep Sherlock occupied. He's clearly very, very clever and cleverness and wit are learning are definitely Ravenclaw traits.

Rachael: Can I make an argument for one Slytherin trait, one particular trait that I think makes him not a Slytherin? In addition to being ambitious and cunning and manipulative and charming, which Jim is all those things, Slytherins also have an extreme sense of self-preservation and we see this with Voldemort, you know, cutting his soul a million times just to stay alive. We see this with The Malfoys, kind of backing down when things get rough because it might mean that they're going to die. This is exactly not what Moriarty does. Moriarty shoots himself on the top of the roof to prove a point and win a game. Although I see Slytherin in so many other ways, I just don't think a Slytherin would ever do that. In fact, I think it's exactly the kind of impulsive thing that a Gryffindor would do to win.

Shannon: I think that's a really interesting case you're making because all along you were saying this, I was thinking he's been very cautious. In *The Blind Banker*, he has Shan assassinated because she knows what he looks like and he has this web around him. He keeps favors and he keeps people manipulated so that he's protected. He doesn't go and approach Sherlock and John without having a bunch of sniper rifles present. And yes, at the end, he kills himself, but he chooses his own death.

No one killed him. That's very powerful and in a sense, it's like we all die and I called the shot here and this is how I go. I thought that's pretty masterful and manipulative. He manipulated the whole game and he forced Sherlock's hand, although Sherlock again was very clever. He didn't fear death because he had it under control. He didn't need to preserve himself from death. He only needed to preserve himself long enough to play the game. That seemed very Slytherin to me.

Rachael: But that's exactly what Harry did. It's *exactly* what Harry did.

Shannon: But Harry could have been Slytherin though. He could have gone into Slytherin.

Queen: Yeah, but Harry wouldn't kill a bunch of people down his path. Harry's point was to die so that no one would die. Harry sacrificed himself. Moriarty killed so he could win. He won by killing himself.

Shannon: I have a question out of this. If Moriarty lacks empathy for others, does he also maybe lack fear? I don't know if you would say empathy for the self. Maybe death and dying and blowing your brains out, what's so horrifying about that? If you can skin someone, why would it matter if you do it to yourself?

Queen: Right, I agree with that. I think he just thinks this is boring, doesn't matter. He has no fear for himself or anything.

Rachael: You're saying he can't be Gryffindor, back to the again, if it's not scary to you.

Shannon: Might be.

Rachael: No, that's the best argument for why Moriarty might be Gryffindor.

Shannon: Well it might in Gryffindor – he even says it so himself, he's insane. Maybe this is part of his insanity. There is something going on here that makes it really hard to sort him.

Queen: You're just figuring that out now? (*laughs*)

Rachael: I just think if you're going to have an evil Gryffindor, this is what it looks like. Otherwise, Gryffindor is this like always good, perfect house.

Shannon: But they're not. There's a lot of assholes in Gryffindor, come on.

Rachael: Ehhh, they're assholes but – like Sirius is an asshole, but he's not evil.

Shannon: But you had Wormtail as a Gryffindor and he was.

Rachael: Wormtail wasn't really a Gryffindor. He was just sorted there so he could hang with those three. He has no Gryffindor qualities.

[*Laughter*]

Queen: Maybe he chose to be sorted there.

Rachael: He did! He chose to be there because he wanted to be Gryffindor, but he has no Gryffindor qualities.

Shannon: Okay, on our next roundtable, where we sort Wormtail – no!

[*Laughter*]

Shannon: Let's move on to our final question. This one is one to have fun with. Thanks to Connie Prince, whom Moriarty helped have killed in *The Great Game*, Mrs. Hudson got her colors done, we're aware of getting colors done. So what house colors do you think Moriarty would look best in?

[*Laughter*]

Queen: Slytherin and I'm not just saying Slytherin because I am a Slytherin and I am in love with him.

[*Laughter*]

Queen: I'm saying Slytherin because Andrew Scott has brown eyes and green and brown look very good together. (*laughs*)

[*Laughter*]

Queen: And I'm thinking like Slytherin green, not neon underwear green.

Shannon: Okay, yeah.

Rachael: Well hey! He wore the yellow underwear. Hufflepuff!

Queen: I know!

[Laughter]

Queen: No! They were neon green.

Rachael: Were they? I thought they were yellow.

Queen: Were they yellow? I feel like they were really limey.

Shannon: It depends on your screen resolution.

[Laughter]

Queen: I may have had a problem with mine.

Shannon: You know what I think – I personally would love to see him in a crown. Particularly a diadem, maybe with a blue stone. So I think he'd look good in blue.

[Laughter]

Rachael: Well, when he's wearing a crown, he looks pretty damn good in that red cape.

Shannon: He does, he does. I think brunettes look good in red. What is that Westwood suit? That was blue.

Rachael: The suit that he wears in court has these nice blue undertones. I'm gonna say in terms of his colors, Ravenclaw works, but I still say he's a Gryffindor.

[Laughter]

Rachael: Not everybody who's a Gryffindor looks good in Gryffindor colors.

Shannon: It's true. I still see him as Slytherin.

Queen: Yeah, me too. Brown and green look good. It's beautiful. He's beautiful, whatever. He looks good in anything, that's my final opinion.

Shannon: Alright. Okay guys, I'm going to thank you for this roundtable and we're going to get ready for our next one in which we sort Anderson and Donovan. I'm very excited.

[Laughter]

Rachael: Both of them together?

Shannon: Because I think we have more to say about one than the other. Thanks everyone and see you next time!

Rachael: Thanks, bye!

Queen: Bye!

Music

Change in music

Watson: *That's fantastic*

Sherlock: *Do you know you do that outloud?*

Watson: *Sorry, I'll shut up.*

Sherlock: *No, it's fine.*

Music finishes.