

READERS' GUIDE

The Detective and the Spy by Angela Misri

INTRODUCING *The Detective and the Spy*

It's taken years, but Portia Adams has found an outlet for her obsessive curiosity as the consulting detective of 221 Baker Street, like her grandfathers before her. Scotland Yard taps her for their trickiest crimes, she's in her last year of law school and finally things are heating up between Portia and her downstairs tenant, Constable Brian Dawes. But a bomb planted at a crime scene destroys everything she has fought so hard to establish.

She wakes up to a world she can't communicate with, the sounds around her dulled and unintelligible and the words that come out of her mouth are garbled and incomprehensible. Brian was hurt in other ways, the burns on his hands and arms causing pain that makes him turn to the opium dens Holmes himself was known to frequent.

The bomber continues to wreak havoc all over London but no one will work with Portia — everyone from her allies at the Yard to the public itself dismisses the young detective as damaged goods. To make matters worse, a rabid spymaster at MI6 believes she's involved in the bombings and Portia finds herself on the run having to relearn her skills in a deafeningly silent world with a spy she can't trust.

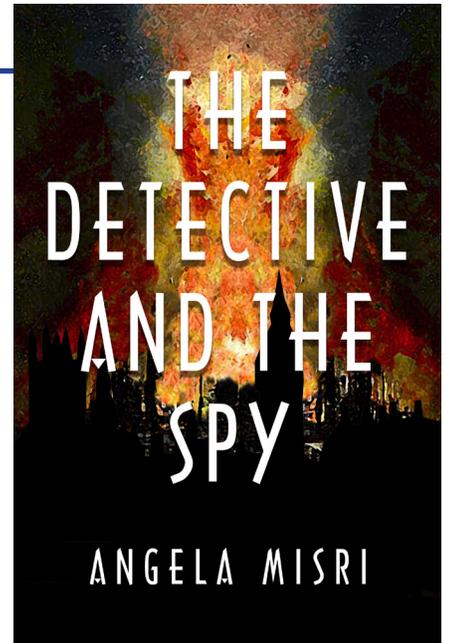
IMPORTANT THEMES

Resilience – Portia has already had to overcome the prejudice that comes with being a woman in a male-dominated career, but her hard-earned respect is shattered when all of Scotland Yard believes her to be damaged goods after losing her speech and hearing in the explosion.

Disability – Portia has a taste of what it's like to be deaf, and to a lesser extent mute, after a bomb explodes at a crime scene.

Addiction – Sherlock Holmes himself struggled with addiction and returns to help another character learn to grapple with it as well.

Betrayal – Many characters in *The Detective and the Spy* are betrayed by those closest to them.



QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. The Portia Adams Adventures series evolved out of Angela Misri's love for the Sherlock Holmes series. Discuss the role of fanfiction in today's literature.
2. What parallels can you draw between Sherlock Holmes and Portia Adams?
3. Discuss the portrayal of Sherlock Holmes and Irene Adler.
4. In Chapter 10, Portia thinks that "To open [the books on sign language and lip-reading] was to admit that this could be a permanent state. And that was unthinkable." Why does Portia react this way?
5. She eventually does open the books and promises Amélie that she will "rectify that hole in her education" (Chapter 27). What changes her mind?
6. Was the mystery of the bombings solved in the way you expected? Why or why not?
7. A lot of characters are betrayed by people they thought they could trust in *The Detective and the Spy*. Why do you think this is?
8. Do you think Portia's skills in detective work are genetic or did she learn them?



ABOUT ANGELA

Angela Misri is an author and journalist of Indian descent. She was born in London, U.K. and briefly lived in Buenos Aires before moving to Canada in 1982. Angela is the author of the Portia Adams Adventures series and several essays on Sherlock Holmes. She earned her BA in English Literature from the University of Calgary and her MA in Journalism from the University of Western Ontario. As a former CBC Radio digital manager and the Digital Director at *The Walrus*, Angela is never offline (although she prefers to write long-form in notebooks). Angela plays MMORPGs, speaks several web languages, and owns too many comic books. She currently lives in Toronto, ON.