The Poison in the Honey, The Sting in the Sweet

by hobbitsdoitbetter, MizJoely

Summary

Ever since fledgling MI5 agent Molly Hooper had her... moment with notorious criminal Sherlock Holmes, her life has been in turmoil. And since Sherlock has been released to find and bring down Jim Moriarty, she knows it won't calm down anytime soon.

Notes

A multi-chapter continuation of our stories "The Trap in the Honey, the Honey in the Trap" (hobbitsdoitbetter) and "Unfinished Business" (mizjoely), wherein criminal Sherlock and MI5 agent Molly Hooper find it hard to keep their hands off each other even while on opposite sides of the law.

See the end of the work for more notes
Chapter Summary

A huge round of applause to artbylexie for this magnificent cover art!
His Right Hand Woman

Chapter Summary

Be sure to address all comments for this chapter to hobbitsdoitbetter - didn't she do an awesome job?

Chapter Song: Smooth Operator - Sade

London, Borough of Enfield, 1982

Mary's waiting for him outside Hooper's, because of course she is.

*Explaining how she found him would just interfere with her air of mystery,* Sherlock thinks irritably.

Leaning against the door of the Merc, smoking a cigarette, she barely looks up when he joins her, just continues to hum along to the car radio. Notes tumble out, some New Romantics bollix which Sherlock hates on general bloody principles; Smoke clouds around her face, a face which breaks into a familiar, cheeky grin as she puffs a ring of smoke at him.

He coughs and she laughs.

"Good shag, boss?" she drawls, laughing again when he nods. "Bout time." She waggles her eyebrows."You must've been gagging for that little agent: You've been so tense-

"Get into the bloody car and drive," he says, cutting her off and hopping into the back seat. *Those last moments with Hooper have left him feeling more rattled than he wants to admit, and his right hand woman's questionable sense of humour isn't helping. "And change that music-"

She gives a jaunty, sarcastic salute and stubs out her cigarette before getting behind the wheel and turning the music higher.

Sherlock cocks an eyebrow at her. "Word is, you work for me," he says.

Her grin turns wicked.

"Some people labour under that misapprehension, boss," she drawls. "They have been misinformed." Despite himself he snorts in amusement. "So, where to? Whitehall?"

He nods, not surprised that she guessed his destination. *Like Hooper, she's a great deal sharper than she looks. "Need to talk to the Ice Queen," he tells her. "Make sure the terms of our arrangement still hold."

Mary nods, pulling out into traffic. "Made them nervous, did it? This afternoon's disappearing act?"

He looks at her. "What did you hear about that?"

*He can't imagine that Winters let that get about.*
"Nothing," she answers, frowning as a bus moves in front of her, blocking her in beside the path. "Just- You. Criminal genius, cutting a deal." She shrugs. "You're only out the length of a fly's fart and you're off the radar."

She turns her attention back to the road, studiously nonchalant. "Sort of thing makes the authorities nervous, no?"

He grimaces. "They can piss their knickers, for all I care," he snaps. "I find Jimmy, and I bring him in. Then it's me and Euri out of jail and that little bastard rotting in Wormwood Scrubs." He pulls sharply at his shirt-cuff, settles back more solidly into his seat. Tries, resolutely, to forget that he can still smell Hooper's perfume on his skin, but he can't. "The authorities' feelings are nothing to do with it," he says, rather than think on it. "Got that, Mary?"

Again that quick grin. "If you say so, boss."

She turns her attention to the road, her demeanour utterly unapologetic.

Sherlock swears, raking his hand through his hair and pushing away a wave of annoyance: Trust Mary to start a conversation she had no intention of finishing up. Truth be told though, he's glad to see her (even if it does mean that his thing for Hooper's not so secret as he'd like it to be). Of all his associates, she's the only one he trusts. Euri had arranged for assistants aplenty over the years- mainly hand-me-downs from her various chattels across the city- but Mary had been the only one who stuck. The only one Sherlock could work with. She was smart, like him. Vicious, like him. Always on her guard, ready with a plan or a knife or a gun. And yet, she had a sense of proportion, when it came to violence: She used it, she didn't let it use her. Sherlock liked that.

He liked the reminder that his sister's way wasn't the only one, that the shark-cage he lived in wasn't the only habitat on Earth.

He also liked that Mary wore her difference proudly, not trying to pretend to be normal: Like him she did what she wanted with who she wanted and sod anyone who didn't like it. *Sod the Home Office, even: if he wanted to shag an MI5 agent then he would.*

With her skintight, pink hair and men's suits, she was a far cry from the tarts and good-girl wives a man like him normally encountered. Mary was something else, something special. Almost the way that Euri was special. And because she was something else, because they worked well together, it was Mary he talked to when thinking over signing the deal with Whitehall. Mary he had trusted to help him track down Wee Jimmy. (She liked his brother-in-law almost as little as he did, after all, and she was itching to get her hands on him.)

All of which was useful, he thinks now, staring through the window, but not necessarily good.

He taps his lip as he thinks it, annoyed with himself, but forced to allow the realisation nonetheless.

*He doesn't like that she was waiting for him outside Hooper's flat.*

Because he's gone out of his way to keep Hooper out of it: If Mary was getting the notion that he was stuck on the little agent, well then she might think she had something on him. She might get the idea that she has leverage on him, and that wouldn't do- *It wouldn't do at all*-

He glances at her in the car mirror, chewing at his lip: there are few people he cares about, but he cares about Mary. It would be a real pity if he had to do something about her-

"Oh stop bloody worrying, boss," she says, pulling him out of his reverie.
He blinks at her, and belatedly it occurs to him how far inside his Mind Maze he'd strayed.

"I'm not going to tell anyone about your little MI5 agent," Mary's saying, "and I'm not going to tell anyone how much you like taking off her knickers, so unclench, yeah?"

And she pulls out another cigarette, lights it as they wait in the traffic at the foot of the Embankment. A copper by the side of the road glances at her askance and she blows him a kiss. Sherlock glares, unhappy that Mary had guessed the direction his thoughts have taken him, but he says nothing.

Some things are, he knows, best kept to himself.

Still, he finds himself a little calmer at the promise: Mary rarely makes promises, and those she does, she keeps.

He supposes that means he can relax for now.

"Just get me to Whitehall," he tells her, leaning over and gesturing for her to give him one of her cigarettes and her lighter. She does, and as he takes his first puff he relaxes somewhat. The smell of the smoke covers the smell of Hooper's perfume, and the smell of the sex.

He leans back in the cab and puffs away, unwilling to examine why he finds that thought so calming- But he does.

_Meanwhile,_

_Inside Agent Molly Hooper's House_

Major John Watson steps around her door and glowers down his nose at her.

"Something you want to tell me, Mols?" he asks, holding out a polaroid of Sherlock Holmes hastily exiting her flat, stuffing his shirt into his trousers.

"Well, bugger," Molly mutters. "I suppose you'd better come in."
As soon as the door closes behind them Molly blurts out, "He hasn't escaped from prison. He's cut a deal-"

"Molly." John gives her that stern, big-brother's-best-friend look she remembers so well from childhood. "*Do not* try to feed me some shite about him being here for a debriefing." He waggles the photo at her. "*Unless it's the sort of 'debriefing' Robbie and I always warned you about.*"

The mention of her deceased older brother gives her a brief pang of shame… Which is exactly what John wants it to do, as she well knows. So she ignores it and instead frowns at him before stomping over to her sofa and throwing herself on it. "Why are you here, John? Spying on me?"

It's an unfair accusation and she immediately regrets it. John's always been there for her, the one constant in her life after losing her family one after the other - Dad and Robbie to cancer and a drunk driver respectively, years after her Mum had abandoned them all. John was fully supportive of her decision to go in for law enforcement rather than pursuing the medical career she'd set her heart on during her teen years, and gave her his full encouragement when she was recruited by MI5 even though she'd initially wanted to join NSY and bring criminals to justice.

Criminals like the one she'd just shagged. Crap. "John, why *are* you here?" she asks again as she starts to shove her sleeves up her arms. then remembers - too damn late - about the marks on her wrists.

"Shit, Molly, what the hell did that bastard do to you?"

John's furious expression is at odds with his gentle hands as he turns her wrists and stares at the slight abrasions left by the cuffs. Molly lets him look, then pulls her hands away. "John, all I'm going to tell you is that nothing that happened here today was against my will."

He fixes her with an incredulous look. "Molly, I know you've always had terrible taste in men, but he's a bloody criminal! One you helped put away!" He rakes his fingers through his graying blond hair, paces around the small sitting room. "I mean, it was bad enough when you gave your testimony at the trial, about how...about what you two did that night in the Diogenes Club, but to do it again?! What the hell were you thinking?"

Molly's temper starts to rise, in no small way because she knows he's right. "I was thinking that I'm an adult woman, and that what I do and who I choose to do it with is none of your damned
"It is if it puts your life in unnecessary danger!"

The real worry in John's voice stops Molly's rising temper. With a sigh she tucks her legs beneath her and tries to untense her muscles. "It's complicated, John, I admit it, but I don't believe my life is any danger because of him."

John crosses the room, sits next to her, one arm along the back of the sofa, a mixture of concern and fear and brotherly love in his eyes. "Molly, men like that, they don't have any problem using people - especially women - for whatever they need. You know that, right? You know you can't trust him? No matter what he tells you, even if he tells you he's in love with you…"

Molly can't stop the scoffing laugh that escapes her lips. "If there's one thing I'm sure of, it's that Sherlock Holmes will never say anything like that to me - and if he ever did, well, I wouldn't believe him." She snorts. "I'm not an idiot - Well, not that much of one."

He looks uncomfortable, opens his mouth as if to say something, but she shakes her head, presses her hand on his. "I don't have any illusions about him, John," she says softly. "This was just...revenge sex or angry sex or whatever you want to call it."

It's clear from his sour expression that he'd rather not hear the word sex coming from his surrogate sister's lips at all, but he stays silent, allowing Molly to have her say. "The only reason he came here was to tell me he'd cut a deal and to warn me to stay out of his way. Then things just...got a bit out of hand. But that's all there is to it, all there ever will be. Trust me, Agent Winters will make damned sure I'm kept as far away from this case as possible."

He doesn't look convinced, but he nods acceptance of her words. "Yeah, all right." He pulls the photo out of his pocket, frowns at it. "I suppose you'll want this?"

She nods, holds out her hand. "Yes, please." The photo reminds her of the unanswered question - "John? Why are you here?" She peers at the picture, unaware of the small smile on her lips as she sets it on her lap. "And why on earth did you bring a Polaroid camera?"

"I had the camera in my car after visiting Harry," he says, clearly answering the easier question first. "She wanted to take some pictures of a flat she's thinking about leasing now that she and Clara have split up."

His alcoholic older sister always runs crying to John when her life goes to shit, as it does with depressing regularity, and Molly refrains from commenting on the fact that John will probably end up footing the bill for the down payment on the new flat. "As for why I came by…” He looks uncomfortable, and Molly knows what he's about to say even before he says it. "An old friend called to tell me that Holmes had been released, but not how or why, and I just...wanted to check on you. Make sure you were all right."

Molly sighs; yep, she should have known. "I won't tell anyone Mike warned you," she promises, trying to hide her annoyance at being 'big brothered' by John's former army mate. Stamford's a good sort, and it's warming to know so many people are looking out for her but still...

"I was worried about you," John admits quietly. "Especially after all that crap about him and you having unfinished business he was spouting that last day in court."

Molly wishes very sincerely that she'd never opened her mouth about that, but Holmes' words had shaken her, and John's always been her rock and she'd never expected any of this to come back to
"I'd just parked the car, was about to shut the door when I saw him coming out of your flat." His lips thin into a flat, unfriendly line at the memory. "So I just grabbed the camera and took the picture, as, I dunno, evidence or something. In case...well." He clears his throat, looks away. "In case. I took down the plate numbers of the car that picked him up as well, although I suppose the driver was one of yours - MI5, I mean."

"No, they didn't know he was coming here," she says, feeling a bit cold. Wondering who he gave her address to; someone who worked for him and his sister, some other criminal associate? Great. Just what she needs, something else to worry about. "Whoever it was, he wasn't one of ours."

"She," John corrects her. "Quite a looker, too." He smiles sheepishly, and Molly can't help smirking back at him. John's always had an eye for the ladies, and she wonders how red he'd get if she told him she knew his army nickname was John 'Three Continents' Watson.

She says nothing, allowing him to live in happy ignorance for the moment, and waits for him to hand over the sheet of paper on which he'd written the vehicle's license number. She thanks him before rising to her feet and crossing the room in order to tuck both pieces of evidence of Holmes' visit into her handbag.

"Molly, promise me you'll keep away from him," John says as she returns to the sofa. He holds up his hands in a placating gesture when she glowers at him. "I know, I know. Grown woman, trained to defend yourself, personal life is none of my business. Got it. Won't stop me from worrying about you, of course, but I promise I'll butt out if you promise you'll at least think about it, yeah?"

"John, I promise you, I have no intention of ever crossing paths with Sherlock Holmes ever again," she says firmly. "And I also promise you that if I do end up needing help, you'll be the first person I call." She relents and smiles at his unhappy expression. "In the meantime, would you like to stay for dinner?"

He shakes his head regretfully, hauls himself to his feet. "No, I've got a date." She refrains from rolling her eyes; of course he's got a date. Any night he's not on duty, he's got a date. "Another night, maybe?" She nods and he leans over, kisses her on the cheek, takes her hands in his and gives them a small squeeze. She kisses him back and walks him to the door, watching as he heads down the road to his car. He waves after he opens the door; she waves back, and re-enters her flat.

She closes the door, leans against it with a sigh, and contemplates the idea of just leaving the answerphone off, hopping into a bubble bath with a glass of wine or two, and soaking the tensions of the day away.

But no, she needs to at least hear what Agent Winters has to say. Heaving another sigh, she plods over to the counter, turns the machine on, and plays the message.

Anthea's voice, sounding more than a bit agitated, comes over the speaker. "Agent Hooper, this is Agent Winters." As if Molly wouldn't recognize her voice. "Look, there's no easy way to say this so I'll just...Sherlock Holmes has been let out of prison. I need you to come in as soon as you hear this, no matter how late it is. I'll be at the office til God knows when, probably all weekend at the rate things are going."

Molly groans and buries her face in her hands. Great, just what she needs after a day like today. Does Anthea really need to see her in person to tell her to stay the hell away from Sherlock Holmes? "I already promised John I would," Molly mutters resentfully as she rewinds the tape and erases the message.
By the time Molly's hung up the phone, she's already predicting the worst.

Cameras in her house, footage of what she and Holmes got up to, her career in flames... She's imagining it all in excruciating detail.

*Unexpected phone-calls from Agent Winters will do that to a person.*

She's imagining the fallout in so much detail, in fact, that she walks smack bang into John, dithering on the pavement outside her place as she heads into town. He takes one look at her expression, sighs and then wordlessly opens his car door. Gestures for her to get in.

Knowing that the mulish expression on his face bodes no good (and, frankly, not really wanting to pay for a taxi) she gives a nod and climbs into his car. Lets him drive her to work. She even lets him walk her into the building- Well, as far as the foyer. He hasn't the clearance for anything else, not in The River House.

She knows without having to ask him that he'll be waiting for her when her interview with Agent Winters is finished.

The thought of facing her boss fills Molly with dread, but she forces herself to keep her head on straight. *To focus. Can't do the time, she reminds herself, then you shouldn't do the crime.* As she signs herself into the building, she spots a small, female figure pacing behind the security booth. The woman is wearing a baggy man's suit, a cigarette hanging from her hips; her shorn hair is dyed a near-neon shade of pink and from the way she walks, Molly can tell she's wearing a concealed weapon.

The young agent wonders at that; if she can spot it then the man on the door must have done so too?

As if sensing Molly's attention she turns and meets the young agent's gaze. Recognition floods her face and her eyes immediately light up, lips curving into an impish grin which sends an irrational jolt of annoyance through Molly. Beside her, she feels John stiffen and fights the urge to roll her eyes: Of course John 'Three Continents' Watson is taken with the woman smirking at her. *Of course he bloody is.*

"I'm supposed to be the one with terrible taste in partners, remember?" she snipes, making the other woman snicker.
As if belatedly realising she's there, John's attention snaps back to her.

The look he shoots her somehow manages to be both diffident and irritated.

"Don't know what you're talking about, Mols," he mutters, and at this she does roll her eyes. The woman behind the booth laughs out loud and, lowering her cigarette, blows John a kiss.

To Molly's slight amusement, she sees the tips of his ears turn pink.

"Hello handsome," the woman calls as Molly hands over her ID, weapon and coat to the security guard, who nods her through whilst throwing an annoyed look at the other woman.

"Keep it down in there, Morstan," the guard says. "Winters didn't say nothing about playing nice with you."

The woman- Morstan- shoots him a look which might just curl John Watson's hair. "No need to get snotty, Jeeves," she says. "I'm only taking in the local scenery."

She shoots John a roguish wink.

As if in answer, the guard hands Molly her night-visit badge and the piece of paper with today's office code written on it. Molly glances at it, memorises the 4 digits and then hands it back to him; he flicks it into a slot beside his chair, sending it to the bowels of the building so that nobody else can see it.

"In you go," he says. "I can't let you have your firearm, but could you clobber Morstan while you're in there?"

Morstan's eyes grow wide. "And me a law-abiding citizen," she says with mock self-righteousness. "You shouldn't go around telling agents to attack the public, love." She throws another look at John. "You'd save me, wouldn't you, handsome?"

Molly is somewhat relieved to hear John snort, "God no. You'd eat me alive."

Morstan laughs at that and moves gracefully out of the way, allowing Molly to walk past her and further into the building.

"Say hello to the Ice Queen," she calls after her, a laugh still in her voice.

oOo

Molly steps out onto the landing of Agent Winters' office to an unusual sight.

Sherlock's lying prone, the side of his face against the floor, his hands cuffed behind his back. Two of Agent Winters' burlier agents are literally sitting on him, their expressions as bland as if they were taking tea.

In fairness, a bone china tea service is sitting on the table behind them, just within reach, so maybe they are.

"Gentlemen," she says evenly as she walks over to Agent Winters' office and taps in the four digit entry code.

She can feel Holmes' eyes on her, but he says nothing.

She hears a click before they can answer and then the door pops open. Molly steps inside, her heels
clicking on the polished wooden floor.

Her boss is sitting before her, perched on her desk as the lights of London twinkle behind her. Winters looks up, glance sweeping from the tips of her toes to the top of her head and without a word she sighs. Gestures tersely to the chair in front of her desk and reaches into it. Pulls out a decanter of brandy and two glasses.

She pours liquid into both.

"He must be a bloody good shag," she says conversationally, pushing the second glass across the desk, and Molly's face reddens.

She sits gingerly down. Clears her throat. There's little point in lying, so- "Yeah," she says. "Yeah, he is."

She takes a quick gulp of the brandy, feels the burn as she swallows it down.

After a moment, Winters matches her. Hers is a sip, however, not a gulp.

"And has he attempted to gain anything from you?" Winters asks. "Aside from access to your nethers, that is?"

Molly winces at the wording, but shakes her head. "No. In fact-" She wonders whether she'll be believed, but again, there's no point in lying. So. "He told me to stay away," she says. "Told me to keep out of it, in point of fact." She shrugs. "He was probably just trying to play on my sympathies-"

"Indeed," Winters snorts. "As if turning up at yours and shagging you silly will encourage you to keep away from things: Ladies and gentlemen, I give you the Holmes Men."

She shakes her head, a small, private smile curling her lip.

"But, since he seems so intent upon involving you, I have decided to use it to my advantage," Winters continues. "Our advantage." She takes another elegant sip of brandy, eyes narrowing as they focus on Molly. The agent has to fight the urge to squirm. "Tell me, Agent Hooper, do you believe that you can control yourself around Sherlock Holmes?"

Molly feels a hot spurt of anger and embarrassment swell within her. "It's bloody well obvious that I can't!" she snaps.

"Winters rolls her eyes. "I don't mean can you keep yourself from jumping into bed with him," she says impatiently. "I mean, can you keep yourself suitably aloof that you won't start telling him state secrets? Can you continue to act in our interest, even when he's trying to ply you with his... manly charms?"

Molly frowns. She doesn't like where this is going, however innocuously her boss is wording it. "Ma'am, are you asking me to act as a honey-trap for Sherlock Holmes?" she asks bluntly.

"She's aware her voice sounds slightly cold.

Winters rolls her eyes. She knocks back the remains of her brandy and Molly has the oddest feeling that she's been tested. Tested, and found wanting in some way.

The realisation does nothing to help her temper.
"Sleep with him, don't sleep with him," Winters says with asperity. "So long as you're not turning double agent for him, I don't give a toss what you do."

She ploughs on before Molly can interject.

"For some reason, you seem to have some hold on him," she says, more quietly. "He came looking for you the moment he got out- Giving the security team outside the slip in order to do it. He all but dragged you into his brother-in-law's office the first night you met and from your own description showed you what can only be described as a smashing good time.

"We've had agents working the Holmes' Family for years, trying to get in, and you managed to do in one night what they couldn't in five years: You have something on him, Molly. Something we can use. Something we can turn against him. The question is: are you woman enough to do what needs to be done?"

Molly blinks, surprised. She has a feeling there's more going on here than she's been told. And yet-

"Yes, ma'am," she says. "Yes, I can keep my loyalties clear when it comes to Sherlock Holmes."

oOo

Five minutes later she exits the office, Winters at her elbow.

"Locke, Tarr," Winters says to the two men still sitting on Sherlock. "Stand up- You're relieved. Agent Hooper is going to be in charge of Mr. Holmes from now on."

The room erupts into a cauldron of swearing, all of the men present glaring, but whether it's his security detail or Sherlock himself who's most annoyed, Molly can't be sure.

Chapter End Notes

A big thanks to everyone who's been commenting and reading and kudosing, we appreciate you so much!
Sherlock is still fuming as he heads for the foyer, hard on Hooper's heels. He automatically straightens his rumpled suit—fucking wankers didn't need to literally sit on him, not after he'd come back completely of his own accord—as he works out six different scenarios in his mind to get Winters to give up this mad idea of making Molly bloody Hooper his handler.

And for any of them to work, some snippy part of his mind sees fit to remind him, he needs to actually be in Winters' presence. Not following Hooper down the hall like a puppy on a bloody lead.

And yet he doesn't turn back. He tells himself it's because he knows Winters won't let him back in, that she'll just set her two idiotic hulks on him and turn him out before he can get out a single word, but he knows the truth, even if he refuses to acknowledge it—

He'd rather hear what Molly has to say about it all, right now, in the heat of things, before she has time to lock down her emotions.

So he continues on, not quite catching her up, allowing her to set the (rapid, definitely annoyed) pace until they reach the foyer, where something unexpected catches his attention—

It's not that Morstan is flirting with some man, she does that as naturally as breathing. No, it's the man she's flirting with that's the unexpected part: a soldier, wearing dress greens. Mid-thirties with sandy blond hair starting to grey, bushy moustache that makes him seem older than he actually is (possibly a deliberate tactic on his part in order to maintain discipline in the ranks or some other military rot), what rank?- hm, a major, that definitely explained the moustache, someone so young needed every advantage he could get to make sure he was taken seriously.

None of that, however, is what sets Sherlock's teeth on edge; no, it's the way the soldier is looking at Molly as she slams into the room. His expression is one of concern, almost possessive— not that Sherlock Holmes is jealous—Molly's already admitted she doesn't have a current boyfriend—

Or has she? All she did say was that the last time she had sex (before himself, of course) was that it was terrible. At least, that was the gist of it. Is the little MI5 agent the cheating kind?

No, he realises as she smiles wanly at the berk in dress greens and gives him a small wave. She's not. The relationship she has with this man is not romantic, but rather… familial.

She's smiling at Bushy Moustache the way Eurus sometimes smiled at Sherlock when they were...
younger and far, far more innocent.

His smile turns to a glare when he catches sight of Sherlock, who's making a point of sauntering as casually as possible past the security booth.

The glare deepens when Sherlock shows Molly the red marks on his wrists from his less-than-gentle treatment at the hands of Winters' thugs and says, "At least we match now."

He meets her frown with an insouciant smirk; Mary snickers, and Bad Moustache flexes his hands as if he wishes they were around Sherlock's neck.

"Molly, what's going on?" he asks, obviously doing his best to keep his temper, which only makes Sherlock itch to see what it will take to make him lose it.

So he does what he always does in such situations: he pushes. "Isn't it obvious, captain?" he drawls, deliberately getting the man's rank wrong. "Agent Hooper's my new handler." He toys with the end of Molly's no-nonsense ponytail, lowering his voice to a seductive purr as he adds, "Makes sense, considering how... hands-on she tends to be with me."

Hooper flicks his fingers away with an annoyed huff. He makes the mistake of smirking at Mary; his only warning is the way her eyes widen before Major Moustache grabs him with one hand and throws a very professional punch that bloodies his nose and rocks him on his heels.

He doesn't hesitate before retaliating with a couple of blows he learned from the few months of boxing lessons he took in his teens. Oh, he could easily take out Major Short-Temper with a few moves of which the Marquess of Queensbury would definitely not approve, but he holds back. Let's the other man thinks he has an actual chance.

It's looking to become a full-on brawl- which he knows Agent Ice Queen will be livid about- but Mary and Hooper, surprisingly well-coordinated for two people who've never actually worked together, manage to separate the two men.

"Enough of that, Holmes," Hooper snaps, jamming his arm up against his back. Getting some of her own back for the way he took her down in her own flat, he assumes. "And John! What's wrong with you, letting him get to you like that?"

Jawn's expression remains truculent but he doesn't move from where Mary has him pinned to the wall, her forearm against his throat and her knee poised at his groin. Just waiting for him to try something. She's grinning her best devil-may-care grin and clearly having the time of her life. The guard at the security booth is watching raptly; he may as well have a bag of jelly babies in his hands instead of the phone he's not yet dialed. "It's fine, Johansen, all under control," Hooper assures him, somewhat breathlessly. She twists Sherlock's arm. "Isn't it, Holmes."

"It's all good," he replies obediently, and feels a pang of disappointment when she lets go of him. Ah well, always time for more of the old slap and tickle later. Since they're apparently going to spend a great deal of time together.

He should feel more resentment and anger than excitement at the thought; after all, this all started because he wanted to warn Hooper away, to keep her out of his path while he hunted down his dear brother-in-law.

Ah well, he'll manage it. He ditched those two clowns Winters assigned to him, he'll ditch Hooper when the time comes just as easily.

Chance'll be a fine thing, his mind scoffs in the voice of his un-dear but very departed older brother.
Sod off, Mykey, he mentally sneers as Mary releases her hold on Jawn—taking her time, brushing off his uniform with exaggerated care, cooing at him in faux-apology. The soldier does not, Sherlock notes, push her away very quickly.

"Let's go," Hooper snaps. "We've made enough of a public spectacle of ourselves for one night." She turns back to Jawn—who is, Sherlock belatedly realizes, not just a friend but some sort of surrogate older brother, no doubt taking the place of the one who died when she was eleven or twelve—and says, "John, thank you, but I can handle it from here."

The look he shoots her is doubtful; the one he darts at Sherlock can be best described as murderous. Hooper steps into his line of sight, capturing his full attention. "Since it appears that Mr. Holmes and I have some things to discuss, I'll catch a ride back with him and—sorry, I didn't catch your name?" she interrupts herself to ask, giving Mary a sweet, insincere smile.

"Mary," both Morstan and Jawn say at the same time, causing him to chortle. Oh, she's already got this one by the balls; ten minutes alone with her and the Major will be putty in her hands.

Hooper doesn't look terribly surprised; in fact, her expression is more resigned than anything. "Right. Mary can give me a lift back to my flat so Holmes and I can have a little talk, and you can get back to your date. I'm sure she'll forgive you for being a little late."

"Already canceled it," Jawn replies. "If you don't mind, Mols, I'd rather tag along. You know, just to make sure Holmes here behaves himself."

Sherlock rolls his eyes at that, since it's blindingly obvious the man means to take full advantage of his role as Stand-In Big Brother. "Or," he says loudly as he accepts the wad of tissues Mary hands him and finally wipes the blood still oozing from his nose, "we can all just go to the Diogenes and let me see how far into the ground Anderson's run the place in my absence."

He's not surprised when both Hooper and Jawn eventually agree to that compromise. If the good Major thinks the lack of a bedroom will keep him from getting back into Hooper's knickers, well, that's his delusion. Sherlock has very fond memories of Wee Jimmy's desk and some very creative ideas for future debauchery in that office with his favorite MI5 agent.

Because if he can't keep her out of this as he'd originally planned, then he's damned well going to take advantage of her presence in every way possible.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you everyone for your wonderful comments. You guys rock!
They make it to the Diogenes without further incident, though whether that's down to John getting some bloody sense, or Sherlock's mysterious Girl Friday chatting him up, Molly really can't say.

Given her experience with Three Continents' Watson and his way with women, Molly rather suspects it's the latter.

When they reach the club, Sherlock opens the car door and reaches a hand in to help Molly out, something which would look old world charming and elegant if he weren't grinning smugly at John as he does it. Molly, not willing to be the bone these two dogs fight over for the night, takes the opportunity of exiting the car to 'accidentally' bring her foot down on Sherlocks in-step, the force of it making him wince.

He shoots her an accusing look and she smiles at him with saccharine sweetness.

"What was that for?" he pouts.

"Just reminding you that I'm here," Molly says airily. "And that using me in a pissing contest with someone else isn't going to wash." She lets go of his hand and nods to a chortling Mary as she pulls away. "Let's get this over with," she adds, lest Sherlock's pout lead to more whining, and starts towards the doors of the club, leaving both men staring at her.

"Don't look at me," she hears John say. There's a sound of hurried footsteps and then Sherlock's beside her again, slipping his arm through hers.

She shoots him a look.

"Tetchy little thing, aren't you?" he says.

Molly narrows her eyes at him. "I can be," she says evenly. "I also happen to have a gun, so if I were to shoot either of you, I'd get away with it."

Some of the swagger returns to Holmes' face. "You wouldn't shoot me," he says with what Molly feels is supremely unfounded confidence.

She cocks an eyebrow. Leans into him. "Try me."

Their eyes meet, their closeness buzzing. For a second, just a second, they might as well be alone, so entirely does he command her attention. Her gaze. She sees his throat work and she can't help it, her eyes flicker down to his lips before she can stop herself...

Holmes opens his mouth to say something- probably something annoying- but before he can the club doors are flung open, a gorgeous, dark-haired woman in a lilac silk dress sauntering out. The club's music pounds in the background, pulsating like a beast. "There you are, darling," she coos to Sherlock and automatically Molly clocks the accent as Irish, from the Republic. She's not someone in Winters' files though, Molly's certain of that. Maybe someone of Moriarty's?
Upon her appearance, Sherlock straightens himself up.

"Janine," he says warmly, disentangling himself from Molly. He offers the dark-haired woman his hand and presses a kiss to her knuckles. "How wonderful to see you- I thought you were still in Stuttgart?"

Her eyes twinkle. "London's a lot more fun," she says.

Sherlock's flow grin is cocky. "Yeah," he says. "Yeah, it is."

And deftly, without saying anything, he pulls further away from Molly. Takes a couple of steps forward and wraps his arm around the other woman's waist before burying his face in her hair and whispering something to her which makes her blush and scream with laughter. Without saying a word he steps into the darkened club and its pounding music with barely a look at Hooper- Or at least he pretends to-

Molly's not buying it though.

For his eyes flicker to her, just for a second, and in that moment Molly realizes, to her surprise, that he's trying to gauge her reaction to the other woman.

She's not sure how she feels about that.

Rather than answering him, however, she merely holds out her arm to John and lets him lead her into the club, Holmes and his... friend in front of them.

**Sherlock's hand has somehow made its way down to Janine's arse.**

"I can still shoot him for you, you know," John whispers in her ear. Molly dips her head closer and, though he's feigning disinterest, she can tell Sherlock notices by the ever so slight way he tenses.

*It shouldn't make her feel better, but it does.*

"That won't be necessary," she tells John. She ponders a moment. "Yet."

She might be imagining it, but she would swear that Sherlock winces, even as he leads Janine further into the club.

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They press the flesh, show their faces, and once Janine is suitably ensconced back in her favorite corner with her favorite companion, Sherlock orders a bottle of Pinot noir sent up to his office and has Molly, Jawn and Mary follow him up there.

He's tempted to bar Wee Jawn but he doesn't think that would be wise- His little meeting with Janine had, rather than putting Hooper back in her box, resulted in both she and Mary looking at him slightly pityingly. He doesn't think trying to bar the other man will help shift that impression.

*It wasn't supposed to go like that,* he pouts to himself.

*But it did go like that,* a voice which sounds irritatingly like Mary reminds him. *So take your lumps and get on with this.*

Scowling to himself because he knows she's right, he opens the books, checks how much damage
Anderson has done to the place while he's been away.

To his surprise, it's relatively minimal.

"Donovan's been helping him," Mary supplies conversationally, reading his expression.

"So he's finally accepted she's the brains," Sherlock snickers. "Good."

And he continues to pore through the books, looking for some evidence of where Wee Jimmy has been squirreling away money from the Club. He has no doubt that the little bastard would think nothing of double-crossing Euri, and the existence of a slush fund would go some way to explaining how he's funding his takeover bid for the Holmes Firm. But there's nothing, no tell tale signs. No unexplained money. Sherlock's always kept a tight eye on the club's finances, and he'd assumed that in his absence Jimmy would have stopped hiding what he was doing and moved it into the open.

Well, he thinks. *You know what Mykey used to say about assuming...*

He opens his mouth to question Mary- and perhaps Hooper- about where Moriarty might have squirreled away his money, but before he can say anything, screams start rising from the club below- Screams and gunfire.

Jawn and Mary are on their feet, weapons drawn, just as Janine skitters through the door, her mascara running with tears.

Chapter End Notes

Show your love to hobbitsdoitbetter and leave a comment. We both appreciate all the ones we've received so far!
Sherlock's on his feet before Janine's even through the door.

"How many?" he barks and the dark-haired woman hiccups, mutters something Molly doesn't catch.

She seems near hysteric.

"How many?" he repeats sharply, taking her by the elbows and shaking her, something which only makes her worse.

"Four," the Irish woman manages to hack out. "Four. They have- They said-"

"I don't give a toss what they said." Holmes looks at Mary, who nods. Beckons John with a raised chin and indicates they should head out. "If you get a clear shot," Sherlock calls after her, "take it-"

John blinks. "There are civilians down there," he growls.

Sherlock opens his mouth to retort but Mary speaks over him. "I'm not going to shoot any non-coms, handsome," she tells him. "This is strictly reconnaissance, so long as they don't shoot at us."

And, preemtping his arguments, she starts down the corridor outside, towards the bowels of the building and what Molly imagines is a back entrance to the club.

John reluctantly follows.

Molly takes Janine by the arm and leads her over to one of Sherlock's chairs. Sits her down. "What did you see?" she asks gently, using the voice which she normally uses on witnesses.

Sherlock swears but she ignores him.

"There's- There's four of them," Janine sniffis. "They- Jesus, they had guns. People don't just walk into a club like this with guns- This is London, not Lagos-"

Molly's inclined to agree, but she knows they don't have time for this.

"And did they say who they were?" she prompts gently. "Are they from another firm, or looking for someone in particular?"

Janine's eyes skitter over to Sherlock. "They said they were here for what they're owed," she says quietly. "They said- They said that not even Séimí Moriarty gets to shaft the Ulster Volunteer Force out of money-"

At the name, Sherlock starts swearing.

"The paras," he hisses. "The fucking paramilitaries. I told Jim we weren't getting involved- Euri told
him we weren't getting involved-"

Molly cocks a head at him. "So he wanted to help the cause?" Which would be odd, since Molly
assumes that as a (nominally) Catholic businessman from The Republic, the likelihood of Jim
Moriarty sympathizing with a group of Loyalist paramilitaries is, to put it mildly, minimal. Perhaps
more to the point, if there had been even a whisper that the Holmeses were in bed with the paras then
Sherlock and Eurus would never have seen the inside of a courtroom, Agent Winters would have
seen to it. No, they'd have gone straight to Sherrinford Island, tout suite-

Sherlock's already rolling his eyes impatiently though.

No, he thought it would be fun, to play both sides. Sell to the UVF and IRA- As if getting on
the wrong side of either would be a good idea." His mouth turns down in distaste. "You know, there
are times I wonder what on Earth Euri saw in the little toe rag…"

"She loves him," Janine says quietly, something pained moving through her features. "And he loves
her-"

Holmes' eyes turn ice cold. "Shut up," he says bluntly. "You don't know what you're talking about." He
turns his attention to Molly, so sharply that the other woman flinches. "You carrying?" he asks.

She nods. "You?"

A small, shark-like smile tugs at his lip. "I won't need to be," he says confidently. His attention
switches back to Janine, his tone dismissive, eyes so cold it makes Molly shiver. "Stay there," he
says. "We'll sort this." And he opens the door for Molly, gestures with exaggerated courtliness for
her to exit the office.

"You're being a prick," she tells him as she does so.

He leans in close, probably trying to make her shiver. *The trouble is, it bloody works.* "All part of the
service, princess," he whispers in her ear. His grin turns filthy, eyes raking over her. "And once we
ditch this lot, I'll make sure you get serviced to your heart's content-"

Molly rolls her eyes, takes out her weapon and moves in front of him to take point.

*She's not even a little turned on, right now, she tells herself. She's not.*

*She's not.*

*Besides, even if she were, she has better things to concentrate on, like not getting killed.*

"Try to focus on something other than your erection, would you?" she says evenly, rather than
pursue *that* delightful notion. "I'll try to make sure you're not shot by loyalist paramilitaries, eh?"

And she takes off down the corridors towards the stairs, Sherlock at her heels and chuckling.

She's not sure whether it's infuriating, or attractive, or both; the realization does nothing to improve
her mood.

oOo

By the time they reach the bar, most of the patrons who could scarper have scarpered.
Sherlock looks around dismally, taking in the broken glass, upended furniture and spilt drinks.

_Someone_, he silently vows, _is going to pay for all that._

His attention is drawn to the four men standing in the middle of the dance-floor, however. Two are young, barely out of their teens. They wear bomber jackets and Doc Martens, their hands stuffed into their pockets with suspicious insistence. Their older companions, on the other hand, look relaxed. Calm. Both are men in their forties, one short and stout with a bushy beard, the other tall and angular. Lean. Entirely bald, save for a black tattoo snaking around his neck. Both are wearing long coats, and Sherlock somehow doubts it's because they're making a fashion statement. Besides, Janine said that they had guns: _odd that they should try to hide the fact now…_

Exuding the insouciance which has made him famous, Sherlock walks silently over and picks up one of his chairs. Sets it aright and then sits on it.

He says nothing, just stares at the interlopers, arms crossed over his chest as if he hasn't a care in the world.

Silence.

A moment lengthens uncomfortably, and then the taller of the two older men grins, digs his younger companion in the ribs. "Told ye the boy had a brass pair on him, didn't I?" He grins. His accent is pure Shankill.

Sherlock cocks an eyebrow but says nothing.

"And this'll be the infamous Morstan," Tall Boy continues, nodding to Molly. "More'n one o' my lads wants to have a word with this wee lassie-"

"Mary's not in a talkative mood," Sherlock says, before Molly can answer. Better the man think his bodyguard in the room with them, than know she's sneaking around the back with Bad Moustache. "And since you've come into my club and ruined my night's profits, I think you should explain yourself, don't you?"

One of the younger men bristles. "Ye don't give him orders, ya posh bollix," he snaps.

For pure mischievousness, Sherlock shoots him his most charming grin. "You're in my house, son," he says, mockingly parroting his accent. "And you're not even a guest: I'll talk to ye as I please. Now-" he switches back to his own accent, leans forward on his elbows. His eyes are suddenly cold. "What. Are you. Doing here?"

The boy fumbles in his pocket, apparently about to draw a gun, but the bearded man stalls him with a hand at his shoulder. "Dead men don't pay their debts, Danny," he reminds him softly. "Besides, you want his wee sister finding out you killed her brother?"

At these words, the boy grows pale and shakes his head.

Sherlock smiles, but it's not a pleasant sight.

"So Jimmy owes you something," he says. "And you're here to collect, correct?"

Tall Boy nods. "He said you were good for the debt," he says evenly. "Said the Holmeses always pay their way. So when our shipment didn't arrive from Dover, of course we came here to share our concerns."
The tone is suspiciously mild. Solicitous.

It doesn't fool Sherlock for a moment, and by the looks of things, it doesn't work on Hooper either.

Not that he's necessarily worried about that: out of the very corner of his eye, he sees Mary and John slip in through the back doors behind the bar, though the paras don't notice a thing and he has to stifle a smile. He taps his lip thoughtfully.

"And what, precisely, has gone astray?" he asks, stalling.

As if there's any doubt what these men wanted to buy from Jim.

Tall Boy shrugs. "A few mere tools of our trade," he says dismissively.

"You mean bombs," Molly supplies. Tall Boy looks at her and she glares mulishly back at him. "I know what trade you and your boys do, pal."

Tall Boy looks annoyed. "A pretty wee thing like ye should keep her nose out of men's business," he says, leaning forward, and he might be imagining it but Sherlock swears he sees Hooper's finger twitch against the trigger of her weapon.

This time he doesn't bother hiding his grin: That's my girl, he thinks.

But this has gone on long enough: Mary is now perfectly placed to take out the four targets. Sherlock can see she's itching to get things started, and Tall Boy's lack of respect for womankind isn't exactly helping. "If I were to say that I have no idea where your… shipment is," Sherlock announces, turning Tall Boy's attentions back to him before Hooper can get any ideas- or he can notice he's surrounded- "then what would you say to me?"

Tall Boy scowls in what he seems to assume is an intimidating manner. Bless.

"I'd say that we'll be taking our losses out on your lovely wee club here," he says, voice darkening. "And ye'll be letting me, Holmes, or my boys won't rest until we've ground your precious dance hall into dust-"

Bushy clucks his tongue sympathetically. Shakes his head.

Tall Boy, Danny and their companion are grinning smugly now.

"Can't have people thinking they can fuck around with the Ulster Volunteer Force," the bearded man says wryly. "We have a reputation to maintain."

Sherlock nods with mock sympathy. "Couldn't have the IRA thinking you can't close a deal, now can you?" His tone drips sarcasm. "That wouldn't do at all-"

And he shoots Bushy his most irritating grin, simultaneously bringing his foot down to the prone barstool in front of him and launching it up at the other man with a well-aimed kick-

There's a hiss of gunshot powder, a flash of light as Bushy, Tall Boy and their boys let a round off and then suddenly, suddenly, the room descends into chaos.

None of which Sherlock really notices, however, because he's been grabbed by Hooper and dragged away from the firing line, her lithe, slim form pressed down against him like a human shield as she hauls him to the floor with impressive strength.

He grins up at her, his hands coming automatically to cup her waist, and she rolls her eyes. "Are you
bloody having me on?" she snaps, even as the shots fly overhead.

"Can you think of a better time?" he counters, and he could swear he sees the beginnings of a reluctant smile on her lips before a body crashes to the floor next to them, ruining (as all such tossers tend to do) a perfectly good moment.

Chapter End Notes

This chapter is presented by hobbitsdoitbetter. We hope you enjoy it, and we both thank you for your lovely reviews!
Sherlock curses as Molly rolls them to the side, her sidearm pointed at the wounded man. It's Tall Boy, screaming and clutching his shoulder, blood flowing freely from the wound near his neck. One part of Sherlock's mind is focused \textit{(not admiringly, he takes time to tell himself)} on how steadily Molly holds the standard issue Glock 19 in her hands even as he notes that Tall Boy has lost whatever weapon he was holding.

He starts to roll out from beneath Molly, but gunfire is still being exchanged, and she's surprisingly difficult to move. She's got one knee wedged between his legs, the threat clear; try to get up and suffer the consequences. He grudgingly allows her to keep him pinned \textit{(okay, not that grudgingly)}, and contents himself with moving his head just the slightest bit so he can gauge the unfolding situation.

Bushy is the only para left standing, although technically he's crouched behind a table as he exchanges gunfire with Mary. Both of the youngsters are down, and Sherlock \textit{thinks} they're both still breathing- at least one of them is, judging by the cursing he hears between gunshots.

Molly bites off an exclamation as a sudden silence descends, and Sherlock takes advantage of her distraction to smoothly roll them so that he's on top, one hand gripping the thigh above the threatening knee. He doesn't waste time savoring their new position, much as he'd like to. He hears a metallic thud, followed by a skittering noise, and automatically clocks it as the sound of a dropped weapon. But whose? Once Mary calls the all clear, he cautiously kneels up, then stands, pulling Molly up with him.

He can see why she was distracted, and grudgingly (full-on grudgingly this time) has to admit that he's impressed at the sight. Bushy now has his hands clasped to the top of his head, his weapon on the floor on the other side of the toppled table he's been using as cover. The reason for his sudden surrender isn't Mary, who's still crouched at the end of the bar (gun at the ready of course), but Jawn.

The major is standing behind Bushy with his gun pressed firmly to the back of his head, finger steady on the trigger. How he got from behind the bar and into position to take out the other man is easy enough to work out, and Sherlock assumes Mary gave him directions on how to do it.

Military men, after all, are good at taking orders from their superiors.

\textit{(When he finds out later that no, Mary had nothing to do with it, his opinion of the major's intelligence goes up a notch. A very small notch, but higher than he'd expected it to rise, so there is that.)}

Seeing that Jawn- all right, John- has things well in hand with Bushy, Sherlock brushes himself off and sees to Tall Boy. "Still alive, but barely," he pronounces, earning a glare from Bushy- but Sherlock sees the fleeting relief in the man's eyes that he tries to hide.

Danny and the other youngster are both alive as well, having taken a pair of shots apiece to their dominant arms and the opposite knee- one of Mary's specialties. Danny-boy also managed to hit his
head on the way down and is still out for the count; it's the other lad who's awake and swearing through his teeth. Probably trying not to cry, Sherlock notes with a mental sneer, at what is obviously his first time getting shot.

"Hurts like the dickens to be on the receiving end, doesn't it?" he asks, unable to resist adding insult to injury. He gets a dirty look from Molly and a dirty name lobbed at him by the youngster and ignores both as he strides over to stand directly in front of Bushy.

The other man glares balefully up at him, hands still firmly on his head and John's gun still making a dent in the back of his skull. "So," Sherlock drawls, being sure to speak as mockingly as possible, "I'm guessing this isn't how you expected things to turn out, eh?"

Bushy maintains a sullen silence, but his eyes promise murder. Slow, painful murder.

Sherlock deliberately turns his back on him; he's been threatened with murder so many times in his young life (although at 28 he's already survived longer than he'd ever expected to) that another threat, spoken or otherwise, rolls off his back like so much smoke.

He holds his hand out to Molly without looking, and smiles inwardly when he feels the cool weight of her handcuffs in his palm. He glances back only once, letting the smile curve his lips as he says, "Shame to waste these on him, but needs must."

She and John give him equally disdainful snorts, but the military man obligingly steps to one side as Sherlock moves behind the overturned table and cuffs Bushy's wrists behind his back. Grabs a fistful of his shirt. Hauls him to his feet.

Molly's not been idle; he hears her retrieving the rest of the weapons, and once Bushy is secured John joins her in performing a rough triage on the wounded men. Mary's shots are precise, surgical; neither Danny nor the other young laddie will die. Tall Boy, on the other hand, might not be so lucky, and he knows the shot that took him down wasn't one of hers- far too messy, but then again, soldiers tend to be less refined than assassins.

A spirited debate follows, during which Molly and John offer their objections to Sherlock's desire to make the four party crashers just 'disappear'. It's a token effort on his part; he allows them to win only because he knows it'll keep Winters off his back- and that he'd have to make the soldier and his favorite MI5 agent disappear as well in order to keep them from talking.

Besides, someone was bound to report the sound of gunshots and- he cocks his ear. Ah yes, there it is, the sweet sound of sirens. Won't the police be disappointed when they're not allowed to haul him in for questioning this time?

Sure enough, the street is soon bright with flashing lights and busy with Met flatfooters all milling around and getting in one another's way. Molly wades into the fray, flashing her ID and demanding that Agent Winters be informed of the situation while Major Moustache shows his own ID and gives his report to the DCI in charge. Some day someone's going to invent a phone that you can carry around with you and doesn't cost a fortune, Sherlock muses briefly, then goes back to lighting a cigarette and watching the circus unfolding in front of him.

Ambulances add to the chaos, the three wounded men are bundled up and taken away- and finally the Queen Bitch Agent herself arrives. He has more than a mild suspicion that the prisoners won't be seeing Scotland Yard after they're released from whatever hospital they're headed for. And he knows that Bushy will be making his first stop of the evening back at the River House.

Speaking of...Bushy is going quietly enough, or so it seems, until suddenly he jerks his arm free of
the grip of the uniformed officer escorting him off the premises. "This isn't over, Holmes!" he shouts as he's being manhandled into an unmarked black car, twisting his head around to glare at him, eyes burning with hatred. "We have unfinished business, boyo, and don't you forget it!"

Sherlock takes a long draw on his cigarette and blows out the smoke in an insolent stream, making sure to meet Bushy's eyes and smile. A smile that says, *Bring it on.*

Molly is talking quietly to her supervisor, and as Bushy is pushed none-too-gently into the back of the car, Sherlock strolls over to join them. He can tell by Winters' glare that he's not wanted, but not being wanted has never stopped him from joining a conversation in the past, and it damned well won't stop him now. "So," he says, clapping his hands together and meeting her gaze insolently. "Can I put the costs for tonight's mess on MI5's tab? Since it's all my dear brother-in-law's fault?"

He's met with twin scowls (*Molly's being much more adorable than threatening*) and, as expected, Winters ignores his question- and immediately goes on the attack. "I'm fairly certain forensics will show those men weren't all shot by Major Watson's weapon." She makes a show of scanning the room, and Sherlock knows who she's ostensibly looking for even before she asks. "So where's Morstan?"

Sherlock shrugs. Fixes her with a bland smile, takes a long drag off his cig before answering. "Dunno."

Winter's cold gaze (*God that woman's name is appropriate, the Ice Queen indeed*) fixes on Molly. "Hooper?" Molly's already tense form stiffens further. "I'm sorry, ma'am," she says. "I didn't see her leave."

Then she does something that not only surprises Sherlock, but makes him more determined than ever to take her back to bed and shag her until she can't walk. She tells Winters- her MI5 supervisor, the woman who holds her career in her hands- that she can't even confirm that Mary was one of the shooters. That she was too busy making sure the asset- himself -wasn't caught in the crossfire.

Winters gives her a look even colder than before, and Sherlock cuts in before she can say anything else. "Look, the fact of the matter is that she left before all this happened." He doesn't even twitch when Molly's Major joins them, gambling that John won't want Mary in trouble any more than he does. "The only 'Morstan' those boys saw was Molly," Sherlock continues, keeping his voice and expression bored, "and that was their own stupid mistake. You've got them, you've got proof that my brother-in-law is up to his neck in crimes against the Crown, and you've got me more than happy to bring him down. Let's just leave Mary out of it this time, shall we?"

He holds her gaze, gambling that this little incident has caused Winters to be even more eager to bring down Wee Jimmy. Because a criminal Firm is one thing, and a weapon's dealer is something else.

Something bigger. Something unexpectedly more dangerous for them all. And she also knows- he can see it in her eyes, read it in her body language -that the game has just become a lot more dangerous. A lot more important.

Winters drops neither her gaze nor her guard, but Sherlock senses capitulation even before she begins the short, sharp nod that means she'll let it go.

For now.
Hope you enjoyed this chapter, which is all mine with betaing by hobbitsdoitbetter. Next chapter just miiiight include the main reason for this story's M rating. :)
Once the paras (and Winters' agents) have been cleared out, Sherlock goes through the Diogenes himself, with a fine-tooth comb.

It's not that he doubts MI5 have his best interests at heart, he tells Hooper… it's just that he doubts MI5 have his best interests at heart.

He couldn't say he blames them.

Hooper cocks an eyebrow at him, but notably neither she nor John try to hold him back as he trails slowly from room to room, searching from the basement to the rafters. Both know as well as he does how Agent Winters feels about him, Sherlock muses, and about his offer of help with Moriarty. The Ice Queen hates having to take it. Sherlock also suspects that both know the likelihood of someone else from the North coming to call, now that Jim's playing both sides has come to light… And the IRA is a great deal more likely to simply bomb the club to make a point, something Sherlock has no intention of allowing to happen.

He doubts Hooper or Watson do either, given the massive loss of civilian life that would entail.

Sherlock, on the other hand, couldn't give a toss about that: he's not in the hero business. But The Diogenes is the closest thing he has to a home- And he'll be damned if he lets a bunch of sectarian fuckwits take it from him. Not when he's worked so hard to build it. Not when he's so close to ridding it of the infestation that is Jim Moriarty.

When he says as much, Jawn rolls his eyes melodramatically, his moustache bristling as if it has a mind of its own. Sherlock smirks at the other man. "You're just sore," he drawls, "because Mary's scampered off to her favorite bolt-hole."

Jawn shoots him a cynical look. "Morstan doesn't strike me as the sort to hide behind a man."

Sherlock's smile brightens, something which should make Army Boy suspicious but doesn't (though it does work on Hooper). Well, this is going to be fun. "If you don't believe me," he tells the other man airily, "then why don't you go and check on her?" His smile widens. "I mean, she'll need to be kept up to date anyway- You might make the perfect messenger boy..."

And he takes a napkin, scrawls an address in Belgravia on it.

"You'll find her there," he tells Jawn, stuffing the paper into his hand. "Go and check if you don't believe me."

The other man looks torn, clearly wanting to check on Mary- and, probably, to grill her on why she disappeared as soon as Winters arrived.

On the other hand, he can probably tell just how wonderfully lecherous Sherlock's feeling, and how
eager he is to have Hooper all to himself. *Choices, choices…*

_The Big Brother in him doesn't know what to do_, Sherlock muses.

It's Molly who breaks the stalemate. "Go," she tells him tersely. "Find Morstan, ask her your questions and fill her in- I'll be fine right here." She shoots Sherlock an unimpressed look. "Not like I haven't been stuck on babysitting duty before."

Sherlock's grin turns filthy. "So you're my nanny, hmm?" He makes a point to lean leeringly over her. "Does that mean you'll punish me, if I've been a naughty boy?"

Hooper's look is dead-pan.

"No," she says crisply. "It means I'll shoot you." She throws a small grin to John, who snorts in amusement. "And then I'll do some paperwork over it, and it will take forever, and I'll have to sign lots and lots of forms, and be on desk duty for a while. But you'll be dead and I'll be relieved." She shrugs, leans into him. "In my business, we call that a Plan B." Another deadpan look. "Do you want me to avail of Plan B?"

"Dear me, no." Sherlock grins. Licks his lips as he looks her over. "We have those in my business too," he tells her teasingly, "but they tend to involve more nudity than gunplay." And he winks. Despite her best intentions, he sees her pulse jump a little at his nearness, pupils dilating slightly, and he beams. Smugly.

Hooper makes a show of rolling her eyes. Turning her attention to Jawn.

"Go, John," she tells the army man. "I can handle things here-"

"I'm sure you can," Sherlock drawls, only to be silenced when she moves to open the door for John and let him out. Her elbow accidentally knocks off Sherlock, but though it winds him, it also turns him on.

Judging by the look on John's face, he's guessed as much.

He looks a little nauseated.

"Don't hesitate to shoot him, if you need to," he tells her, sotto voce. Molly nods as he disappears into the night. The door clicks shut behind him and she turns to Sherlock, her eyes wary, body-language defensive. Her pulse is still thudding at her throat, however, and Sherlock can see quite clearly that her pupils are still dilated. That sweet little tongue of hers slides out to lick her lips, even as her eyes dart down to his mouth. Back up to his eyes. Then, inexorably, down to his mouth again.

Oh, he thinks wryly. _Oh, but my little Agent Girl has it bad-

"You're thinking rather loudly, you know," he tells her, crowding into her space. Grinning down at her.

He can see her nipples peaking against the cloth of her shirt and bra, can feel himself becoming hard, cock swelling to press uncomfortably against the buttons of his trousers.

*Jesus, he can't remember the last time someone turned him on with so little bloody effort…*

Hooper swallows thickly. "Claiming psychic powers now?" Her voice is arch but even as she says the words she moves closer to him. Into his space. Into his heat. It seems that she, just like Sherlock, cannot help herself. An inch or so more and they'll be nose to nose, toe to toe. Body to body.
Sherlock knows that Molly is aware of that.

And, as if reading his mind, she crosses the boundary. Crowds into his space. Stares up at him, up at him. There's a fire in her now. Their eyes meet, hold, and then she's kissing him, he's kissing her. They're a tangle of sweat and heat and panting breaths as she propels him backwards to splay against the front of the bar. To press him up against it, sweet little tits to hard, heaving chest. Knee pressed sharply against the thick, heavy ache between his legs.

*This is, he thinks, the very definition of a bad idea and it feels fucking great…*

His arse hits the ledge and he huffs out a breath, grinning; Her hands reach around, arms encircling his waist as she writhes against him until one small, clever hand reaches down. Grabs his backside and squeezes, her other hand coming up to press against his heart. To feel its throb, its beat.

He buries his nose in her hair and groans out her name. The hand at his chest travels downwards, mercilessly downwards, until the heel of it is pressing harshly against his hard, aching cock-

Her hand grazes his throat and he moans. Loudly.

*Were he the sort of man who could feel shame, he knows he'd be feeling it right now.*

"Like that, do you?" she practically growls, and even as he's nodding, smirking, she yanks one of his wrists back, her own darting to her belt. He feels the cold of her handcuffs against his wrist before his mind catches up on what she's about to do, and maybe, he decides, maybe he's just getting rusty but suddenly the other side of the handcuffs has clicked around the nearest beer tap, locking him to it. Holding him fast.

He yanks but the damn thing has no give.

"Fuck," he hisses, though whether it's praise or profanity, he can't say.

He shows her his teeth- "Not happening, sweetheart-" but even as he growls it, she's kissing him again. Stopping his words. He can feel their hips moving together, their bodies aching to meet. Join. Molly's free hand comes up, tangles in his curls and as she yanks his head back and nips at his throat he lets out another, darker moan-

"Christ," he mutters, and the voice doesn't even sound like his. "Fuck, that's so good, Hooper…"

The second set of handcuffs- *John's,* his mind automatically registers, and *won't that be a fun story to tell Mr. Moustache-* appear and suddenly he's spreadeagled, one wrist secured to the beer tap, the other to one of the charmingly authentic Victorian lamps which Euri insisted they buy for the club. It's nailed down to the marble of the cash desk and immoveable. Unshakeable.

Hooper steps back from him, surveying her handiwork, and even as he glares at her, Sherlock can't help but acknowledge how aroused he's feeling now that he's pinned. Trapped. Caught.

His prick feels so hard it could walk off on its own.

He tries to ignore how hard this is making him, but it's useless. Previous to this, the only woman with the stones to even attempt this on him was Mary's good friend and occasional wingman Irene bloody Adler- And she hadn't succeeded- Nobody had succeeded- *Nobody would dare do something like this to him-*

"Well now, that's better," Molly says, and though she's a little tousled, a little breathless, she's nevertheless not the one handcuffed and prone, apparently helpless.
She is, however, as obviously hot and bothered as he is, and that gives Sherlock some relief.

He glares at her, but she doesn't look as if she's at all convinced by his display. Instead she walks towards him—no, saunters—and slowly, slowly starts unbuttoning his shirt. His trousers. She presses soft, breathless little kisses against his throat and chest, her tongue tracing wetness against his flesh. His nipples. Her teeth comes down to nip and bite. Sherlock moans at the pleasure of it, shivering, and as he does she reaches her little hand inside his smalls. Pulls out his cock. He shivers even harder as the red, hardened flesh meets the air of the bar.

Suddenly, he feels rather exposed.

Suddenly, he feels rather ok with that,

"Now that's what I'm looking for," Hooper purrs, and as he watches through narrowed eyes she palms his length. Strokes him. Her teeth and lips worry a dark mark, there against his throat, as he writhes against her hand. Hisses out profanities. He jerks against the cuffs, but she doesn't stop. Doesn't pause.

"Fuck,' he breathes out, quite without his meaning to, and the smirk she shoots him is every bit as smug, as triumphant, as the one he usually wears.

*For perhaps the first time in his life, he understands, viscerally, why people find it so annoying.*

But before he can voice this, she's wriggling out of her skirt, pulling her knickers and tights down. Before he can say anything she's pressed his arse back against the coolness of the bar, dragged his head back again, fingers tangling in his curls. "Shut the hell up while I fuck you," she growls. And then she's on top of him. Writhing against him. With her free hand she takes his cock, brings it to her entrance and then she's sinking down on him, shuddering as she does it. Moaning as he fills her up, so deep and so full that he swears he can feel her against his balls. His heart.

"Shit," she murmurs against his throat, "shit, that feels so fucking good…" She kisses him, long and deep. "Why is it that always feels so good with you?"

"I don't know." And it's true, he doesn't. Just as he doesn't know why he's letting her do this. Were he to tell her to stop, he knows she would; were he to decide he wanted free, he knows he could make that happen. *And yet, and yet*... Their eyes meet, him buried deep inside her, her pressed tightly against him. It feels electric, gorgeous. Wet and filthy and wrong and right. It feels like something Sherlock's been looking for for a long time, and judging by the look on Molly's face it feels like that for her too.

He doesn't understand it.

But before he can think it through, before he can bloody *cogitate*, she starts to move. Rising slowly against him, then lowering herself back onto his cock. Hissing obscenely at the pleasure it gives her, her slim elegant fingers pressing into her clit. *Christ, Sherlock thinks, she's beautiful like this...* Her tits are right in front of his face, calling out to be sucked and nipped at, her thighs clasp him tightly as she rises and falls. Rises and falls. Slowly, she moves, so slowly, as if she's savoring it. Savoring *him*. *The thought scalds his insides and he doesn't know why.* Their eyes lock; her mouth is on his, and then all there is to do is feel, feel, fucking *feel*...

He gasps, filling her up. Hips thrusting to meet her as she angles down towards him.

She bites and sucks and kisses his mouth, his lips, his throat, his nipples, as her hands thread through his hair and pull. As the nails of one hand dig into his arse.
"Fuck," he murmurs and this time he's in no doubt: it's nothing less than a prayer.

There's nothing else in the bar, no sound, no thought, just flesh and pleasure and the need of them together. Moving, fucking, licking, kissing, until Sherlock's cresting on a wave of pleasure and he can tell by the shiver in her thighs, by the catch in her breath, that Molly's nearly there too. So he doubles his pace, kisses her harder. Fucks her more sharply, more sweetly, until she's coming for him. Falling apart around him. She keens, hisses, her teeth breaking the skin at his throat, and the flash of pain sets him tumbling over and down, down, down. Into bliss. Into sin.

When he comes back to himself her arms are anchored around him. Her forehead pressed to his.

Their breath is a hurricane between them and Jesus, Sherlock feels like he's been hit by a truck.

"Fucking hell," he mutters, and despite herself, it seems, Molly grins. Laughs huskily against his throat.

She presses a kiss there and just for a moment, she holds him close.

"That's going to make one helluva incident report," she tells him, and at this he laughs too. Smiles too.

She checks his wrists for damage as she uncuffs him, and for some unknown reason, he's overcome with the need to kiss her again.

She laughs breathlessly against his lips as he does.

Meanwhile,

In Belgravia

The champagne's chilling and the bath's ready when Mary hears the doorbell ring.

Of course, given that Irene's busy setting out the toys for their evening together, she doesn't expect the other woman to answer the door.

So, ever the gracious guest, Mary opens up the door, expecting their food, only to find that sweet little handful of handsome Agent Hooper has trailing after her on the doorstep.

He looks dark. Windswept. Upset and manly. Or maybe that's just the moustache.

"We should talk," he growls out- Only for his eyes to flick from her to the scene behind her as Irene walks out of her playroom. Stark naked. Looking edible.

She's also wearing a massive strap-on.

"My," the dominatrix coos, "don't tell me you finally found a place that delivers, Mary, did you?"

"You'd better come in," Mary tells him, hiding her grin, and with that she rushes John Watson inside, post haste.

Chapter End Notes
A huge round of applause to hobbitsdoitbetter for this smutty, smutty chapter. Be sure to tell her what you thought! You know we love hearing from you, and thank you for all your lovely comments!
So Much For The Afterglow

Chapter by MizJoely

Chapter Notes

This chapter was written by both hobbitsdoitbetter and myself.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Chapter Song: Heat of the Moment - Asia

Mary has to hand it to The Moustache Man, he acquits himself well as he steps inside Irene’s flat.

For he doesn't leer. Doesn't try to cop a feel. Doesn't even make some stupid bloody comment about being asked to join in.

He merely smiles apologetically at her and Irene, lets his eyes drop to somewhere suitably far away and suitably not-naked as he waits for his hostess to retire inside and put some clothes on.

He'll be a long bloody time waiting, Mary thinks wryly.

Irene, being Irene, grins wickedly and sprawls across her chaise lounge, still nude except for the strap-on. Eyes dancing with mischief.

Mary's mouth quirks in amusement- "Darling," she tells her, "the poor boy doesn't know where to look."

Irene's grin widens. "Oh no," she purrs, "I think he knows exactly where to look." She takes in Mary's expression and pouts. "Not so sure about you, though."

Mischievousness, as it often does, seizes Mary and she reaches down. Kisses Irene good and bloody proper, just to remind her who she's dealing with.

After all, Irene wearing the strap-on is something of a special occasion.

The other woman leans into it, kissing her back harder until they're both breathless and starry-eyed. Whatever else they may do, and whoever else they may do it with, both Mary and Irene know that kissing one another is one of life's special pleasures. When they pull apart, Watson is still looking fixedly at a point on the carpet, pointedly ignoring the exchange.

The tips of his ears have turned pink.

"Sorry about this, ladies," he says. His eyes flicker to Mary. "And about earlier- Didn't realize you had someone waiting at home."

"She doesn't." Adler's tone brooks no disagreement. Mary rolls her eyes. "But I must say," Irene continues, running one bare, flirtatious foot along the carpet and into Watson's line of vision, "you are being remarkably polite about all this."

His eyes flick up, meeting hers. "Sister," he says evenly. "She just broke up with her girlfriend back
in Nottingham." His lips twist. "Dad disowned her when they moved in together."

"Ah." Something a great deal less lascivious and a good deal friendlier moves through Irene's expression and Mary smiles. Kisses her wrist. "That explains it. But tell me," she adds, "why are you here?"

Now, Watson looks uncomfortable. Curious, Mary thinks. "You disappeared," he says to her, turning his attention from Irene. "After the thing in the club, you disappeared." He shrugs, looks even more uncomfortable. "I wanted to make sure you were alright."

Mary snorts. "Wanted to interrogate me, more like."


Mary crosses her arms, looks at him. She's normally good at sizing people up, but she's having trouble getting a read on this one. She looks at Irene and her expression indicates she feels the same way. Of course, there's no need for her to answer any of the Moustache Man's questions, but given what Irene was discussing with her before he came in, it occurs to her that it might be a good idea to bring him into the loop a bit.

If nothing else, she suspects that his first loyalty is to Agent Hooper rather than Agent Winters, and that could prove very useful indeed.

So she nods to Irene, who pouts but stands. Goes and fetches a robe, somewhat mournfully unbuckling the strap-on as she goes.

"You and I should talk," Mary tells him. "There's been a… development I didn't foresee."

And with that Irene re-enters, a bottle of whiskey and three glasses in her hands, and she and Mary start explaining just what Jim Moriarty has been trying to talk Irene into, the cad.

Meanwhile,

In the Diogenes Club

The smile fades from Molly's lips as the full impact of what they've just done comes crashing down over her. She reaches tentative fingers to brush at the bite-mark- so much more than a simple love-bite - she's left at the base of Sherlock's throat. He's not bleeding, thank God, but she can see the indents of her teeth, the purple bruising already rising, and wonders that he isn't cursing her for doing such obvious damage.

What she's just done to him...with him...she's never done anything like that before. To anyone. Ever.

But it's not that thought that crowds her mind with sudden panic; nor is it even the fact that they've just had unprotected sex. In a public bar. On a public bar.

No, it's her reactions to him that scare her. The concern she feels about having hurt him with her bite. How comfortable she's becoming with him. How they make one another smile and laugh.

How much...fun they're having together.

Oh God, is she actually starting to care about him? To like him?
She starts to slide off his body, shuddering at the feel of a sudden warm dribble between her legs. "Shit."

"Relax."

She glares at his smirk. "Don't..." she starts to say, but he interrupts her, sitting up and reaching one of those big hands of his around the back of her neck.

She shivers involuntarily as he rubs soothing fingers over her skin. "You're on the Pill, never had unprotected sex with a partner before - nor have I, hello, the bad boy knows how to be good sometimes! - and neither of us is currently using. And no," he adds before she can make the snarky comment self-defence demands she make, "I neither had nor was a 'prison wife'. So no worries there, either."

Molly elects to ignore the modifier he's used when mentioning drugs; she's never done more than smoke the occasional joint in her teen years (and not even that since deciding on a career in law enforcement), and she doesn't want to know what kind of things Sherlock's been into in his highly checkered past (she adamantly ignores the faint scarring on the insides of his arms that tell their own story, one she tells herself she doesn't want to hear.)

But she does breathe a silent sigh of relief that he mistook the reason for her sudden urge to flee; if he thought for one second she was falling for him, he would ruthlessly use that to his every advantage.

And in the end, turn as cold to her as he'd been to Janine when she'd protested that Moriarty and Eurus loved one another.

This isn't a man who believes in love, and the sooner she remembers that the better off she'll be.

So she turns brisk. Professional. Removes his hand from her neck and herself from atop his body. Advises him to put some antiseptic ointment on his neck. Grabs a handful of black paper napkins and wipes herself off. Tosses the soiled napkins into the bin- but can't stop herself from handing him a couple of clean ones.

He takes them, mutters a sarcastic 'ta' and slides off the bar to clean himself up as she hunts for her scattered clothes. There's a dent between his eyebrows that speaks of puzzlement, but she ignores it- ignores him - as she redresses herself.

Slipping into her heels, straightening her skirt and raking her fingers through her hair- she hasn't found her handbag yet, can't even run a comb through the tangles- she finally allows herself to meet his gaze.

He's lounging against the bar, still utterly, gloriously naked and about as self-conscious as naturist at Praia do Homem Nu*. He pours himself a shot of Talisker, quirks an eyebrow and pours one for her when she nods.

The puzzled expression is gone, replaced by one of cool indifference that cuts her to the quick even though it's exactly what she wanted to see. She ignores her own reaction, gulps down the whisky and finds herself utterly lost for what to say next.

Sherlock, however, has no such problem. "You're second guessing yourself," he says after tossing back his own shot. "Worried you're getting too involved with the asset." His lips curl in a sardonic expression as he gestures to himself. "Don't worry, princess. It's just sex. Once this is over and Jimmy boy's behind bars, you'll never have to see me again."

She tells herself she does not hear a note of hurt behind his cold words.
"Get dressed," she says curtly, slamming her shot glass down onto the smooth mahogany of the bar. Trying not to let her mind's eye replay their most recent bout of lovem- of sex -as she turns to hunt for her handbag.

"Where are we going? Back to yours?"

He's grinning, she can tell even without looking at him. Damn him.

"You can have the spare bedroom," she says, answering without answering. Hearing his dark chuckle as she scans the floor and tabletops for her missing- ah, there it is. Dangling by its strap from a barstool. "Hope you're comfortable sleeping with your wrist cuffed, since I don't trust you not to run off without me."

She turns, sucks in a startled breath; he's right there, so close that she has to crane her neck to meet his gaze. "Or you could just sleep with me, princess. Make sure I don't get up to any mischief." He leans closer, turns his head and whispers against her ear, "Or make sure I do. Third time's the charm, they say."

She closes her eyes, tries to ignore her fast-beating, treacherous heart and ignore the part of her that's jumping up and down and screaming yes please. It's grossly unfair of him to remind her that they've had sex twice in the same day, but then, what does she expect from a man like him? He's a criminal, dangerous, unscrupulous- and he'll toss her aside just as soon as he's earned his freedom by capturing James Moriarty.

"Fine" she says, forcing herself to meet his gaze. "You can sleep in my bedroom." Before he can do more than smirk in triumph, she adds, "The other bed doesn't have any convenient place to snap the cuffs to and it's smaller." She smiles sweetly. "I think we both agree you need the space."

oOo

She's angry with him- or possibly (more likely) with herself. No huge deductive leap needed to figure that much out.

After all, she's just had sex with a criminal genius for the second time in one day. No wonder she's pissed at herself.

And yet…

There's something else. Something he's missing (he always misses something, goddammit). Is it the way she marked him? He knows he saw something like regret and concern in her eyes after she uncuffed him and got a good look at the raw-primal, possessive-bite-mark she left on his throat.

He wonders how she'd feel if he did the same to her, quickly dismissing the thought. It's too personal, too much like he wants more from her than just sex.

Sherlock Holmes has never wanted more than just sex from any woman. Even this one. And nothing's going to change that. Not big brown eyes or a pixieish nose or cinnamon hair falling like a waterfall over her shoulders (or her ability to give as good as she gets and willingness to stand up to him, or her coolness under fire or her…)

He bites off a curse, makes sure to send a leering smirk her way when Molly gives him an inquiring look. She tries to make it seem more impatient than anything else, but this he can see right through. When it changes to one of disgust he turns away. Starts the process of redressing himself.

But the puzzle of Molly Hooper is still nagging at the back of his mind, no matter how hard he tries
to ignore it. To put it in a box and lock it away. Or better still, to erase it, delete it.

Once Euri's free from prison, he resolves. Pretending it's the first time he's had this internal conversation with himself. Pretending that he can keep Hooper from clawing- biting, gnawing- her way under his skin.

Pretending that she hasn't already done so.

And he still can't fucking understand why.

*Praia do Homem Nu - Nudist beach in Portugal. The name translates to "The Naked Man".

Later,

In an undisclosed location beneath Whitehall...

The package is small. Nondescript. It fits into the palm of Eurus' hand.

Though she both sniffs and tastes it, she can find no trace of anything on it other than her prison. The envelope bears no stamp, no mailing address, just a bald inscription saying OPEN ME.

Interesting, she thinks.

There are so few interesting things in her life these days.

So she purses her lips, thinking. Pondering whether she should open the envelope or not. It could, after all, be a trick; though Agent Winters says she trusts the Holmes siblings to find Jim Moriarty, Eurus doesn't really believe her. Anthea has been chasing her too long to simply give up now… and yet, if nothing else, the lack of evidence on the object shows that whoever slipped it into her food tray is reasonably clever. Clever, and also aware of how clever she is. That doesn't really narrow down the list of suspects, she muses- Though so long as it's not her blackguard of a husband then she doesn't mind. That would almost be as bad as if it were Winters.

Maybe it's Sherlock, she thinks, and her heart skips a beat.

If there's anyone she would dearly love to hear from, it's her beloved baby brother.

When she opens the envelope though, she sees black and white photos inside, taken from one of the Diogenes' cameras by the looks things.

They show her brother, her Will, fucking that little M15 bitch Hooper in the middle of Eurus' bloody club.

They're a mass of movement and need and lust in the photos, both of them, and Eurus is horrified by the fondness with which Sherlock is gazing at his little slag. The open joy of it.

She feels a ball of cold, wretched, brilliant rage unfurl in her chest at the realization.

So this, she thinks, is what he's doing now I'm out of the way.

A note drops out of the envelope, written in the same hand as on the front. THOUGHT YOU SHOULD KNOW, it says, and nothing more.

Eurus probably wouldn't notice, even if it did.

For her heart is breaking, splintering, shattering into a million pieces. Her Will, her Sherlock, he's
using her absence to drag himself back to that little MI5 whore and that is a thing that will not be borne. For the first time since Mycroft died, Eurus feels the rage of having her hold on her brother thwarted, and just as she had that time, she refuses to accept it. Refuses to take his disloyalty lying down.

Slowly, slowly, she drops to the floor. Curls in on herself.

"I have to go to my Mind Palace," she murmurs.

For the next twenty four hours she will neither speak, move or eat and by the time she does, she will know exactly what she's going to do…

Chapter End Notes

Thank you as always for your wonderful comments. They mean the world to both of us!
She's quiet on the way back to hers, and Sherlock tells himself he doesn't think it awkward.

After all, silence in the aftermath of sex is sort of the ideal, isn't it? No nagging, no chatting, no trying to pretend that you're interested in the bird, even if you aren't. Janine had been a nightmare for that, he muses, couldn't keep her trap shut for two minutes, so much so that he'd started muting her early on. Same with Violet. And Zara. And Genevieve. Even his last boyfriend, that charming little toff Henry Knight, hadn't been able to keep his opinions to himself. In fact, Sherlock had had to hand the little twink over to Euri and Jimmy dear to shut him up-

And that being the case, Sherlock tells himself bracingly, that being the case then Molly Hooper's silence shouldn't be bothering him. Not in the slightest.

Women, like children and tax inspectors, should be seen and not heard.

And yet, despite this stalwart assertion, he finds himself on edge as Winter's government car takes them back to Hooper's. While he may not have enjoyed the chatter from his former lovers, he is dismayed to find he wouldn't mind it from her. He likes the sound of her voice, the taste of her. The presence of her. It's almost... addictive.

Get a hold of yourself, he tells himself bracingly. You're no addict, and you never will be.

He glowers, annoyed at himself. Hooper's a good tumble, but nothing more. She's a useful asset for you, just like you're an asset for her. That's it. Besides, you don't get attached- You never get attached.

That sort of romantic bollocks is for Euri.

Despite this though, he knows he's pouting as they enter the flat he so recently broke into. He's also pouting as Molly shows him her bedroom. Gives him a moment to undress, something which he overrides by immediately starting to shuck his clothes- trousers first.

If he's hoping for a reaction he's in luck; Molly's cheeks heat and she looks away, but she doesn't leave. When he saunters up to her, completely naked, she doesn't skitter away. Rather, she meets his gaze, holds it, only to slap one side of a pair of handcuffs on his wrist before pushing him lightly backwards and attaching the other to her headboard.

Once he's in place she steps back, out of his reach.

He cocks an eyebrow- "Trying to tell me something, sweetheart?"- but she doesn't answer. Merely pads out of her bedroom, returning within moments carrying a pillow and some blankets. She sets them out on the floor, forming a makeshift bed.

"Can't get enough of me?" Sherlock leers but Hooper merely looks at him.
"I'm not an idiot," she says bluntly. "Those cuffs wouldn't hold me, let alone you." A shrug, which is just a touch too tense to be nonchalant. "This is insurance."

And she settles down, her gun in her lap and still wearing her clothes.

Sherlock feels ridiculously, embarrassingly under-dressed.

"Night," she says, sitting up to turn off her bedside lamp and then lying back down.

She says nothing else and eventually Sherlock lets himself fall into an uncomfortable, uneasy sleep.

\[\text{OoO}\]

It's the crying that wakes her, his voice loud and desperate, and just for a second Molly isn't sure whether he's trying it on or genuinely in distress.

\textit{He is, after all, a bloody good actor.}

Nevertheless she crawls out of her makeshift bed. Stands. Turns on her bedside lamp and creeps closer. He doesn't flinch at the sudden brightness, and that, she thinks, probably means he's still asleep. He certainly looks it; he's tangled in the bedclothes, head shaking and limbs curled around himself protectively. The voice in which he's crying doesn't sound quite like his either, it's higher and softer, more like that of a child. And his face… Molly swallows when she sees it. Tears streak down his cheeks, his already-pale skin even whiter, his eyes tracking desperately from side to side beneath his eyelids. His hands are clenched into fists in the bedclothes.

He looks like he's literally fighting for his life.

"Mikey," he's murmuring, "Euri, you promised you wouldn't hurt him-"

Tentative, worried, Molly steps towards him. Sits on the bed beside him.

She wipes the sweat-slicked hair back from his face and whispers to him to wake up, wake up now-"It's alright," she murmurs, "It's alright- I've got you, I promise I've got you-"

And she reaches down, hesitantly, to press a kiss to his forehead. At this he lurches into waking, and suddenly Molly finds herself on her back, pressed into the mattress beside him, one hand around her throat.

The only reason he isn't using both, she thinks, is that one's still handcuffed to the bed.

He's wild-eyed, desperate. Screaming in her face and shaking her. \textit{He doesn't seem to know where he is.} Her training takes over; without any hesitation she slams the heel of her hand into his jaw, knocking his head back with a teeth-rattling clatter that bounces the back of his skull off the headboard. This move is quickly followed by a sharp jab to his sternum, her other hand digging her nails into his wrist and twisting painfully. The blows surprise him more than wound, but it's enough: he loosens his grip and Molly immediately darts off the bed, panting. Crawling towards the corner of the room where she keeps her concealed firearm, the one only Agent Winters knows about.

She finds it, cocks the weapon towards him, but when she looks at him, Sherlock doesn't even seem to notice. No, he's panting- hyperventilating really- and rocking in the bed as if he wants to crawl out of his skin. Still muttering about "Mikey,"- \textit{his brother}, she wonders?- and shaking so hard his teeth rattle in his head. Her adrenaline starting to dissipate, Molly's sense takes over; this may have been less an escape master-plan, she realizes, and more an explosion of emotional trauma-
After all, if there's one thing she knows about the man before her, it's that he's seen more than his fair share of awful sights.

*He was only twelve when Eurus murdered their older brother, and he had been in the room when it happened; that's the sort of thing that leaves a mark.*

So with this in mind she lowers her weapon, cocks her head and softly calls, "Sherlock..?"

He looks up at her, his eyes wide and frightened. "Molly," he whispers, "Molly, am I- Did I-" His voice trails off and she sees the precise moment he comes back to the room. Back to himself.

His lip curls in disgust, though whether it's at her or himself she can't be sure.

She tells herself insistently that she doesn't feel the cut of that deep in her chest.

"Jumping at shadows, princess?" he snaps at her, ignoring his wet cheeks and tears-hoarsened voice. But though the words are sharp and confident, the tone is anything but. His hands twist in the bedsheets, eyes still wary in the gloom.

Needless to say, given that, Molly doesn't take the bait.

Rather, she approaches, gun still held downwards, her tone open and encouraging. "You were yelling," she says. "You woke me up-" He goes to speak over her and she rushes on- "Do you want to tell me what happened?"

This time when he looks at her, it's clear the spite is all for her.

"Why?" he barks. "Want to kiss it better?" He grins, face turning shark-like, and he begins pulling back the blankets covering his bare legs and cock. "I've got something better for you to kiss, if that's what you're after, princess…"

Molly crosses her arms, not impressed with either his words or that insulting nickname. She's not about to let it rile her either: it doesn't take much sense to work out when a man's talking about sex because he doesn't want to talk about something else- like the fact that he's been crying in his sleep.

*She'd also bet a year's wages that he really bloody needed to.*

"You mentioned a Mikey," she said softly instead, leaning against the wall beside her. Trying to keep her body language as open and unthreatening as possible. "That was your brother's name, wasn't it? The one Agent Winters says your sister killed?"

Immediately she sees that she has said the wrong thing; for the first time in their entire acquaintance his expression turns completely closed. "Don't talk about what you don't understand, there's a good girl," he drawls. "And don't try to use pillow talk to get that bitch Winters' info out of me."

His voice is like ice, his eyes colder.

It irritates Molly, in that way he always has.

Matching his stance she cocks an eyebrow at him, her own voice also a drawl. *If he wants to be a fuckwit, well, two can play at that game.* "I know a lot about that case," she notes. "I know that your sister shot your elder brother in cold blood because he was trying to take you back to your grandparents-"

"That's a lie!" And instantly he's on his feet, pulling hard at the hand still attached to the bedpost.
Surprised at his vehemence, Molly skitters back a couple of feet.

Worried now, she brings her weapon to bear on him: he seems so much more emotional, so much more savage, than he's ever been in any of their other interactions. While she's sure he's embarrassed at having been caught crying, surely there's more to it than that? After all, she's always known he was protective of his sister, but this, this seems more like a child scared of a monster than a grown man trying to scare an opponent-

"Sherlock!" she snaps, trying to reach him with business-like calm where kindness hadn't worked. "Sherlock, if you continue to try and get loose you'll either hurt yourself, or I'll be forced to shoot you."

He glares at her, shows his teeth. "You won't shoot me," he snarls. "You like fucking me too much."

Molly brings the firearm up straight and cocks it. "Try me," she says evenly. He glares at her, panting, but she sees the moment he regains control of himself enough to kick petulantly at her bed and huff back down onto it. Curl himself away from her.

He turns his back and finally, finally, wipes away the tears from his face.

Molly has the good grace to pretend not to notice.

The silence is loud, explosive really, but though she knows she shouldn't Molly can't find the will to be angry at him. For the first time in their acquaintance, what she feels is rather more tenderness than irritation, despite how he's trying to get a rise from her. So she pads forward. Reaches out and uncufts him. Just for a moment, she touches his shoulder. She knows it's ridiculous, reckless even, but nevertheless she wants to show him that she's here. That it's ok.

It's never going to be ok with him, a voice that sounds remarkably like John Watson's whispers in her ear.

But she ignores it. "If you ever want to talk," she says softly, "about, about the case or anything else, then I'm here." A beat. "And it would be for you, not for Agent Winters." She doesn't know why she said that. He's nothing but an asset, after all- Either that or a bloody good shag.

She remembers the way he spit out that he was a good fuck and she finds she has to look away.

Sherlock is stiff, silent, but he doesn't shrug her hand off. Doesn't pull away from her. This close she can hear that he's still breathing rather harshly.

"You don't understand," he says darkly, "you'll never understand..." He shakes his head. "There are things that you need to do, things you do for the people you love... That's what that bitch Winters never bloody understood..."

And he pauses, still breathing heavily. His free hand comes up to cover Molly's own. Before she can get anything more out of him, however, her attention is drawn to the sound of John Watson opening her front door and trying desperately to steal inside.

This would be rather easier if he weren't in the company of two mischievous women in remarkably high stiletto heels.

"Halloo!" Mary calls merrily. "We're breaking and entering!" A titter of laughter. "Are you and the agent bonking again, boss, or can you come down and listen to some intel?"

Just like that, the moment cracks, splinters, and whatever else Sherlock might have said, he bites
back. Pulls away from her. Shrugs on his shirt and trousers and pads barefoot out of Molly's bedroom.

Still unsure, still armed, Molly follows after him.

Her hand burns where he'd touched it.

If she has trouble meeting John's eyes when she gets downstairs, well, she's not going to think too much about it-

After all, it seems she may have larger problems at hand.

##oOo#

Sherlock can feel Jawn's eyes on him as he enters the room, and Mary's, but he honestly couldn't give a toss.

Behind him, her heat reaching out as if she were burning, Hooper trails in his wake. Her fucking kind eyes and her fucking soft voice goading him onwards. Her pitying, knowing gaze making him want tear at her, making him want to reach out and break something, anything to shredds. He feels like he's run a marathon, hands shaking and tired, so tired. Truth be told, he blames himself: he's never had one of his nightmares anywhere but in his own bed, and he hadn't considered that it might happen to him here.

That had been a stupid assumption.

It's not the only stupid assumption you've made lately, is it? A voice which sounds uncannily like Euri whispers and at the thought he flinches, fists tightening. Instantly he feels Hooper's hand at his shoulder. Hears her murmur his name.

He harshly shrugs it off.

"Shut it," he snaps, and as he'd know he would, Jawn is immediately on his feet. In his face. It feels so good to have something to hit that he smiles at the bastard, shows his teeth even as the other man pulls back his arm, throwing a punch-

Sherlock longs, longs, longs to feel the blow land on his face.

He longs, longs, longs to stop feeling so rattled and small and ashamed and afraid.

It is not to be, however: Mary catches John's wrist lightly- "Can't let you do that, love,"- and he turns his ire from Sherlock, only placated when the bodyguard adds, "However much he might deserve it."

Sherlock cocks an eyebrow at her- "Et tu, Mary?"- but she shrugs, unrepentant.

"You're being a prick, boss," she tells him evenly. She throws a look at Hooper. "You want to have a go, I'll allow it," she adds, prompting a trill of laughter from Irene Adler, who Sherlock belatedly realizes is sitting in the chair behind her.

She gives him a flirtatious little wave, the grin on her face as infuriating as ever.

Molly shakes her head though. Looks away. "If there's something we need to say to each other," she mutters, "then we'll do it without an audience, thanks." Her gaze turns to Adler. "I don't know you, love, so you don't get to hear my business," she adds. Despite his best intentions, the words prick at
Sherlock's feelings, and he finds himself muttering a quick, "quite," followed by an equally quick, "sorry." The words are so quick and low that anyone listening might have trouble hearing them.

Nevertheless, Hooper- Molly- clearly does.

She shoots him a single sharp cock of her head and he immediately feels better, something which seems to him to be much more dangerous than it appears to be. To push the thought away- and, let's be honest, to annoy Jawn- he lowers himself into the nearest armchair and grabs her. Pops her into his lap, one arm hooked tightly around her waist. His chin on her shoulder.

She twists in his grip, looks at him askance but he resolutely doesn't meet her gaze.

"You have intel," he says bluntly instead, looking from Irene to Mary to a clearly furious John. "Tell me what it is so we can get back to bed."

Before John can launch into the rant he so clearly wants to share, Mary speaks over him. "We've got news about wee Jimmy," she says. A look to Irene. "Tell him what you told me, love."

Irene smiles coquettishly. "I had a visitor last week," she begins, "one I rather think you'd be interested in." She turns her attention to Sherlock. "Jamie Moriarty came to me with a… Well, saying it was a request is rather dishonest. It was framed more as a diktat from on high."

Molly frowns. "Go on."

Irene's expression turns careful. "He… requested that I make contact with an acquaintance of your sister," she tells Sherlock. "One Culverton Smith-"

"The telly presenter?" Molly interrupts.

Adler's smile somehow manages to be chastising even as she nods. "The same," she says. "Jamie wanted me to act as a go between for them, given that I am already privy to Smith's more… singular tastes."

Molly frowns. "Singular tastes?" she asks. "What is he, gay? In the closet? Fond of doing things to sheep?"

Adler's smile is shark-like. "Nothing so pedestrian, I'm afraid." Her eyes flicker to Sherlock's, a question in them, and he gives a minute nod.

He's not in the business of keeping Smith's secrets, not if he's in bed with Wee Jimmy.

"Smith has an interest in pain," Irene says slowly. "Or rather, he has an interest in death. Murder, specifically." She pauses, ever the drama queen, to allow Molly to gasp. "Several years ago he contacted Eurus Holmes with a request for… test subjects. People he could practice his craft on. Eurus refused."

At Molly's confused look, Sherlock takes over. "We don't trade in people," he says quietly. "We don't traffic them, we don't sell them. We don't do people, full stop." A smile twists his lip. "It's Eurus and I's only rule, and it's served us well." His expression darkens. "It's also the thing Jimmy and I disagreed the most about-"

Mary nods. "Which would explain why Smith is throwing in his lot with Jim," she says. "The
"Hunting ban in London has always impacted him and his little pack of wankers the worst-"

"Hunting ban?" John asks and Sherlock, much to his consternation, flinches.

Even knowing that he and Euri had disagreed about this, he's aware he won't come out of this explanation well.

"London is my sister's manor," Sherlock says quietly. "It's us Holmeses' manor. So it therefore follows that if you want to, say, sell drugs in our manor, we get a cut. If you want to run girls in our manor, we get a cut. And if you're a killer, and you want to take someone out in our manor, well… Eurus has a problem with that. Says it's disrespectful." He shrugs, trying for nonchalance and failing. Spectacularly.

"Price of doing business," he mutters, and out of the corner of his eye, he sees Hooper straighten as the full import of what he's saying sinks in.

Suddenly, she looks like she wants to clock him.

"But if you ask," she says quietly, "if you come, cap in hand, and make a request to the great and mighty Eurus Holmes-"

Sherlock winces at the sarcasm. "Then my sister might, theoretically, grant you a hunting license," he says quietly. "For the right price, she might, theoretically, even keep the pigs off your back." He frowns, looking away. "She's never granted one-" he's aware his tone is defensive- "and she certainly wasn't going to grant one to that little pervert, Smith-"

"Which is why Smith moved onto streetwalkers," Irene adds. "Nobody so grand as myself, but then they wouldn't be, would they?"

Sherlock can hear the slight bitterness in her voice, even after all these years.

Swift as lightning, Mary reaches out and presses a kiss to Irene's lips; as she does so, John reaches out and squeezes her shoulder, the motion surprisingly respectful and calm.

The look Mary shoots him is unreadable.

Irene makes a show of rolling her eyes, but she doesn't shrug away from either John or Mary. "It happened," she says quietly. "That saying about spilt milk and crying seems apropos, right now." And she straightens her shoulders, looks at Sherlock and Molly.

Holmes is rather aware of how stiff Molly currently is in his arms, but he doesn't want to admit it to himself.

"The long and the short of it is that Smith is doing business with your brother-in-law," Adler tells Sherlock. "Which means that- given how terrified everyone is of your sister- he's probably giving him a place to hide out, too."

She reaches into her bra, takes out a small business card for, of all things, a hat-maker. "Go to Smith's wing of Bart's," she says. "Ask to speak to him and show him this- He'll think that Jimmy sent you." A slash of a smile to Mary. "I can tell you right now, I won't be going along."

Before she can say anything Molly reaches out. Grabs the business card. "I'll take that," she says. "We can set out right now- It's barely midnight."

And before Sherlock or John can react she's on her feet. Halfway up the stairs. "Are you getting
dressed," she yells down at Sherlock, "Or aren't you?"

Before Holmes can open his mouth though, John has grabbed a hold of him and dragged him
towards the back of Molly's house.

"You and I need to have a little chat," the military man hisses, and though she trails along behind
him, Mary doesn't attempt to intervene.

Well, Sherlock thinks with dark humor, looks like I'll get that arse-kicking after all.

He smiles.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you for all your lovely comments. Be sure to let hobbits know what you think of
this chapter!
"All right Holmes. What the hell was all that back there?" John demands as soon as they crowd into the small pantry-cum-cat sanctuary, judging by the amount of scratching posts, soft pillows (almost entirely free of cat hair, thus demonstrating Toby's contempt for them) and cat toys scattered about.

"What did it sound like?" Sherlock replies with a smirk deliberately calculated to infuriate, ignoring Mary's restless motion by the door. "Oh, right, you've probably never heard Molly's version of pillow t-

"Don't feed me any of that bullshit," John snarls, fisting his hands and looking very much like he'd rather be throwing punches than trading insults. As would Sherlock. "Why the fuck did you drag Molly into this if you're just going to treat her like shit?"

"I did my best to keep her out of it," Sherlock snaps back, unsure why the accusation stings as he meets Jawn scowl for scowl. "You can blame the Ice Queen for involving Molly. The only reason I came by here today was to warn her off-"

"Bollocks," John replies bluntly, causing Sherlock to huffily wonder if he's ever going to be allowed to finish a single sentence in this bloody conversation. "If you'd wanted her kept out of it, you'd never have slipped your leash and come by here at all- and yes, I know all about your original handlers," he adds smugly. "Agent Winters filled me in on that little tidbit back at your club. Oh, and if you're thinking about finding a way to exclude me from all this, think again. I'm being seconded to MI5 for the duration. Paperwork should come through first thing tomorrow."

Sherlock's scowl deepens; he had indeed been planning to whisper in Molly's ear how much easier things would go for them all if her bloody guard dog was out of the picture, but Major Moustache seems to have neatly sidestepped that possibility.

Fine. He can always use a punching bag for the times his frustrations fill him to overflowing- as, point of fact, they're doing right now. He can't bloody think for all the confusion in his mind. So he shoves his face close to Jawn's. Makes sure his smirk is as obnoxious as he can make it- and that, he knows from experience, is quite obnoxious indeed.

"All right, Saint Jawn, have it your way. Hang around. Get in the way. Get yourself killed, for all I care. And when Molly's crying over your cold corpse, I'll be busy taking out my dear brother-in-law and making sure Euri and I get as far away from London as we can get. Won't that make Molly happy, hmm? Me gone, you dead-" he clucks his tongue in mock pity. "No one left whose shoulder she can cry on except darling Anthea. And her cat," he adds spitefully. "I expect she'll be getting more of those since she's already well on her way to spinsterhood."

"Sherlock-"
He lets out a contemptuous bark of laughter, ignoring Mary's warning tone just as he ignores the sick feeling in the pit of his stomach at his own, deliberate cruelty. Instead he offers up a final taunt, the one he knows will get him punched. "I mean, let's face it; she's no beauty queen, not with those thin lips and tiny tits…"

The last word barely leaves his lips when the expected punch is finally thrown. Jawn's face is purple with rage; Sherlock relishes the sight even as he times his retaliatory blow so that it lands within seconds of the one that rebloodies his nose. His fist connects with the other man's chin, hard enough to bruise and split his lip below that ugly face-fur he insists on sporting. He feels the impact- both impacts- and bares his teeth in a savage smile as he finally gets the fight he's been itching for.

John's first punch is swiftly followed by a flurry of blows, about half of which Sherlock blocks. The major drops him to his knees with a hard punch to his stomach; Sherlock takes advantage of his position to knock him off his feet so they're both on the floor, rolling around in a furious battle for the upper hand. John's got him by the throat; the sound of a crash comes as they knock over one of Molly's sturdy metal shelves, glassware smashing and pasta scattering around and over them as they grapple with one another, trading blows and curses in equal measure.

It can't go on forever, of course; within seconds Molly is in the doorway, shouting at them to stop, threatening to shoot the pair of them while Mary stands silently behind her.

Sherlock only notes this by the merest flicker of an eye, far too focused on getting all these bloody annoying feelings out of his system. Shame. Anger. Concern- for himself and Euri, not for anyone else, especially not for Molly bloody Agent Hooper and her soft, warm body and her warm brown eyes and her sympathy…

Just as they did at the River House, Mary and Molly wade in to separate the two combatants, working in tandem; this time, however, it's Mary who grabs Sherlock and Molly who wrestles Jawn to the opposite side of the small room. Molly's got the major by his lapels and is snarling something in his face, but Sherlock's too busy trying to break Mary's chokehold to pay much attention to anything else.

"Take it easy, boss," she grunts as he continues to thrash in her hold. She's got one arm twisted up behind his back and isn't gentle as she slams him up against the nearest wall with her other arm around his throat. Oh, Mary really is in a temper! Has she so easily switched her allegiance to Major Moustache? Sherlock wonders. Can he still trust her to have his back as they put themselves in harm's way?

He pushes aside his doubts, locks them up even as his rage finally begins to subside.

A good brawl is nearly as useful as a good dirty fuck for clearing his mind of extraneous concerns. He can focus now, even with questions about Mary's loyalties nagging at the back of his mind.

So he straightened up. Grins smugly. After all, the good Major will be wading into the fray with them; for now, they're still all on the same side.

"Take it easy is right," Molly pants, glaring at Jawn as she releases him. "What the fuck is wrong with you? Him, I get- but I expect better of you, John. Robbie would be ashamed."

"Robbie would have beat the crap out of him the first time he opened his bloody mouth," Jawn shoots back, but holds his hands up in a surrendering motion when Molly shoves him in the chest. Hard. "Sorry, Molls, that was a cheap shot." He turns his gaze on Sherlock, lip curled
up in an angry snarl. "But this bastard doesn't know when to keep his gob shut."

Sherlock glares right back at Jawn, feeling very satisfied with the amount of blood dripping from the man's face, the bruising starting to show around his left eyes, the puffiness of his lower lip-

"Trust me, boss, you don't look any better," Mary remarks, doing that mind-reading act of hers again, her hold easing not one whit. Sherlock gurgles a little to indicate he's having trouble breathing, let alone speaking, and she chuckles lightly at his theatrics. "Please, I'd be doing all of us a favor if I was holding you hard enough to make you black out, but I don't think we really have time for you to take a nap- no matter how much you need one."

With those words she releases him and steps back.

Molly is still radiating fury as she glances between the two men. "Feel better, do you?" she spits out. "Got it out of your systems?"

"Just what I needed," Sherlock asserts, rolling his shoulders and cracking his neck to get the kinks out of it. "Just give me a tick to finish getting dressed and we can head to Barts." He winks and grins at Molly as he brushes past her. "Don't worry, I know exactly what to do now."

He ignores Mary's doubtful look as he strolls back into the kitchen and from there to the sitting room.

Irene, as expected, is already gone. A shame; he had a few more questions for her. *Don't need her*, he tells himself as he bounds up the stairs. He and Euri have never needed to rely on anyone but themselves in the past, and this time is no different.

*Dear Jim is a dead man*, he tells himself firmly, doing his his best to ignore the frisson of nervousness that tries to shiver its way down his spine.

*A dead man.*

*If you believe that, you'll believe anything*, a voice which sounds disturbingly like Mary chimes in his head.

**Meanwhile**

"MI5 and the army?" Jim arches a skeptical eyebrow, cradles the receiver between shoulder and ear as he lights a cigarette. "Really, darling, don't you think you might be exaggerating just a wee bit?" He pauses, listening as the speaker on the other end of the line continues. "Hmm, all right then. I'll be sure to be on my guard. Kisses, love. Thanks for the intel."

He drops the receiver back on the cradle. Takes a slow, thoughtful drag of his cigarette. Tilts his head back and blows the smoke up toward the ceiling. "MI5 and the army," he repeats, shaking his head as he picks up the phone and enters a number, jabbing each button forcefully enough to show that he's not as insouciant as he otherwise appears.

Leave it to his dear brother-in-law to end up with an MI5 babysitter who just happens to bring along an army friend as back-up. It's a surprise, and if there's one thing Jim doesn't like, it's surprises. Not with an operation as delicate as this one is.

He should have known the bloody UVF wankers would fuck things up. Still, it's not a total loss; he just has to rearrange the timetable a bit, put the screws to Adler...

His attempt to reassure himself that it all hasn't gone to shit vanishes as the phone rings and rings and rings...and eventually goes to an answerphone message. "Fuck!" he shouts as he slams the receiver
down on the cradle. He wills himself to calmness; just because Irene's not answering doesn't mean she's slipped off to warn Holmes of his plans. Why would she, after all, considering how disappointingly their little tryst turned out?

Then again, she and that cunt Morstan have always been tight. He purses his lips as he considers the possibilities, the smile once again blooming on his lips as he reaches the obvious conclusion. Still smiling, he picks up the phone again, dials a different number this time. An in-house number.

This time he's rewarded by the sound of a voice on the other end of the line. "Smith, me auld flower!" he chirps. "Exciting news in regards to our little deal…"

And he explains to Smith what a darling, matching pair of tests subjects he's sending him…

"You know Adler, of course," he coos, "but I don't believe you've ever had a government agent before…"

Chapter End Notes

John and Sherlock just can't keep their hands off each other, can they, sigh. Let me know what you think, and as always, thank you for your lovely reviews!
Let's Dance

Chapter Notes

Just FYI there have been some HEAVY revisions made to the scene with Mary and Molly (as in, it used to be like three paragraphs long and had a very different ending).

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Chapter Song: Let's Dance by David Bowie

Half an hour later,

The ambulance loading bay of St Bart's Hospital

They get in far too easily for Molly's liking, and despite his surface cocksureness she can tell that Sherlock feels the same way.

He keeps glancing at her when she thinks she's not looking, and Molly is far too wise to think that it's anything other than jitteriness- No matter what her wayward heart might want to believe.

So, knowing that such sentimentality is a) misplaced and b) likely to get her killed by distracting her, Molly forces herself to continue on their journey into the hospital. It's unnerving: they walk through too-quiet corridors, past too-empty rooms. The Bart's basement seems abandoned, something a busy London hospital should never be. Lights flicker, shadows loom. The entire building feels like it's holding its breath and Molly is suddenly painfully aware of just how ancient the place is.

It feels like the building itself might be a ghost.

Sherlock walks skittishly, his usual, strutting grace curtailed. He keeps in front of her- much to John's visible annoyance- and he insists that Mary keep her firearm drawn, despite the legal problems with such a request-

"Better safe than sorry," he tsks when John finally questions it aloud.

Much to the other man's annoyance, both Molly and Mary agree with this.

"You do realize that I'm the only person here actually licensed to be armed?" John huffs, making Molly roll her eyes pointedly. It makes no difference, though. In fact, Sherlock shoots him the sort of cocky grin which would normally get someone shot, and it's a sign of how irritating Molly finds it that John's hand twitching towards his own weapon makes her feel better.

"This isn't exactly an on-the-books situation," Sherlock points out. A flash of a smile. "And even if it was, I'd still want Mary carrying-" A nod to Molly- "And you too, of course, princess."

The flirtatious smile he shoots her makes both John and Mary roll their eyes.

Molly opens her mouth, about to tell him to get bent, when they hear the sound of a heavy door
opening up ahead, then banging shut again. The sound of radio static follows, and then something which might be a small child crying.

The noise bounces coldly off the walls, slithering along the tiles like a snake.

Immediately the group stops, Mary and John pulling ahead of Sherlock and Molly to check out the source; they dart around a corner and then reappear, moments later, John carrying a large plastic doll in a dirt-stained pinafore. Someone has put out its eyes and a note saying *Please Give Me Back To My Mummy* has been pinned into its chest with a nail.

The wailing sound is coming from within it.

"Well," Molly says wryly, "Someone definitely knows we're here." She wrinkles her nose. "Has this Smith bloke always such a drama queen?"

"Oh always." A quirk of his lips and Sherlock nods, rakes a hand through his curls. Despite his attempt at bravado, he looks a little rattled. "Can you get that thing to stop crying, Mary?" He asks- *the sound is rather annoying-* but before the other woman can say anything the lights flicker out. All of them, even the emergency lighting on the exits.

Immediately Mary drops the doll, pulling out her lighter out and flicking it on.

"Well, fuck," she mutters and Molly suspects she speaks for them all.

Everyone pulls taut, takes out their firearm, even Sherlock. (And where, precisely, Molly finds herself thinking, was he keeping *that*?) In the flickering light of Mary's lighter, everything seems fantastical. Grotesque. Again Sherlock pushes himself in front of Molly, he and Morstan pressing back to back and forming a human shield as John pads forward, weapon drawn.

So great is the group's distraction that they barely notice when the doll stops crying.

Stop it does, however, the recording within its chest hitching on the same two second relay even as a hissing sound fills the darkened corridor. With a muttered string of swear-words Mary raises her lighter, looks down at the doll, only to see streams of smoke beginning to leak from its mouth, its nose and ears.

As the smoke streams out its small plastic body deflates, the plastic starting to melt.

"What the hell-?" John mutters, reaching down to touch the doll. Sherlock matches him. The smoke curls upwards towards John's mouth and then suddenly he drops like a stone. Head hits the floor, body twitching. Gasping. He's fighting for breath, or life, Molly's not sure, but within seconds Sherlock follows him, his longer body contorting as if in pain. His eyes wide and unseeing.

Molly feels something uncharacteristically like panic bloom in her chest. 

*Shit.*

"Gas," she mutters, pulling her jacket collar up to cover her face. "We need to get out of here-" She starts pulling at Sherlock's feet. "We need to get *everyone* out of here-"

"You think?" Mary's tone is sarcastic though she too is pulling up her collar to cover her face. With a look of distaste she kicks the doll as far as she can down the hall, shooting it a small, vicious grin as she does so, before moving her lighter to watch where the gas is drawn to.

*They do, after all, need to get back to the fresh air as quickly as possible and a draught is useful for*
"There," Molly says, pointing to a door to their right towards which the smoke seems to be curling. She lets go of Sherlock, tries the handle and when it doesn't give she puts her shoulder to it. Knocks against it as hard as she can.

With a grunt of effort the door gives, and she turns back to Mary, making to grab Sherlock's legs again and start pulling him into the room while Mary does the same to John-

A spark lights the darkness before they can though, a gun sounds, and then suddenly Mary's lighter has dropped to the ground, her hand going to her shoulder as blood blossoms through her jacket.

The flame from her discarded lighter throws shapes and shadows all around, making the darkness even harder to navigate, making it seem like the walls themselves are dancing.

Taking cover, Mary darts into the room beside Molly, using the door-jam as a screen while another three rounds clip neatly into the ground between her and the fallen men-

"I'll lay downfire," she pants, "You get the lads and hole up in here, yeah?"

Molly's about to protest, to point out that an injured sharp-shooter is no good to anyone, but before she can the lights in the corridor and room suddenly come on again. They're bright, far brighter than they were before, so bright in fact that they hurt her eyes. Disorientated, she and Mary flinch back and as they do so the door of the room in which they were sheltering swings into life, knocking them both backwards before banging shut with a resounding thud.

Immediately they hear the door's lock click into place, hear the sound of more gunfire. More in desperation than thought Mary scrambles to her feet, yanks at the heavy metal door, trying to budge it-

"No, no, no," she's muttering, "I'm not letting you kill my boys-"

The door doesn't move though, and after a moment the gunfire stops, the sound of marching, heavy boots overriding it.

"More than two out there," Mary says.

This realisation doesn't exactly inspire confidence.

Molly can hear the other woman's labored breathing beside her, and that doesn't inspire confidence either.

Before she can say anything though there's a thump from the other side of the door and both she and Mary jump clear, only to swear colourfully when they hear a mocking laugh and a voice Molly recognizes.

"It's raining, it's freezing," Jimmy Moriarty croons, "Sherlock is bleeding…"

"Hey Jimmy-boy," Mary yells, her tone mocking. "How much do you reckon the little woman's going to pay me for gutting you over this?"

Another mocking laugh sounds. "Oh Mary," the Irishman giggles. "You're such a card!" He snorts. "Don't you know Eurus loves me?"

"She loves her baby brother more." Molly lets out some militarily colourful language as Mary
smacks her palm impotently against the steel of the door; they hear Moriarty walking away, his voice dying to nothing. Silence descends. A clock ticks, loud and oppressive, as she and Mary look around their new prison, taking in the steel tables. The microscopes. The rows and rows of cold chambers in which bodies might be stored.

Turns out, they're in the Morgue.

*Somehow, it seems fitting.*

"At least," Molly says after a moment, "At least I'll be able to take care of that shoulder, Mary…"

She sets down her firearm, moves to the nearest equipment tray and starts sorting through supplies. Mary watches her with cold, impassive eyes as she sterilizes a tweezers, and makes no sounds at all as Molly patches her up as best she can. Thank goodness the bullet went completely through, else this would be a lot more difficult; there’s only so far her field training can take her.

As she works she can’t help wondering about Mary’s reaction to their imprisonment - specifically, how she called Sherlock and John her boys.

*When did John start to matter to the other woman enough that she cared what happened to him?*

Before she can work up the nerve to ask such a personal question of a woman she’s known for less than twenty-four hours, Mary stands up from her position on the low stool on which Molly’d directed her to sit. “We need to find a way out of here. Check the phone, Hooper, see if by some miracle it’s actually working.”

By the tone of her voice she expects the answer to be ‘no’ but Molly rises obediently and checks anyway. “Dead,” she pronounces after fussing with the buttons, then slams the receiver down. “Appropriate, considering where we are.”

Mary doesn’t even roll her eyes at the horrible joke, just continues stalking around the room, opening drawers and tapping the walls - presumably in search of some secret entrance, although Molly can’t fathom why St. Bart’s would have such a thing in their mortuary.

Then again, considering how they ended up here in the first place, she decides it’s best not to take anything for granted.

Mary nixes the idea of shooting the lock off the metal door - even with her skills as a marksman, the odds are against them doing anything more than ricocheting the bullets around the room and accidentally injuring or killing themselves.

They spend a good twenty minutes searching for ways out other than the one door - aren’t there fire laws requiring multiple exits from rooms in public buildings? If there are, then this morgue is definitely not up to code. There’s only the main room and its locked exit, and a small office in the back holding a small desk, a chair and a row of six-drawer filing cabinets along the wall opposite the door.

Just as Molly’s about to suggest they try to use one of the bone saws to dig into the concrete in order to get at the hinges, there’s a sound from behind them. She and Mary both spin around, guns in hands, to see a short, stout, blond-haired man strolling towards them from the office - which had definitely been unoccupied when they searched it - grinning from ear to ear.

“What the hell did you come from?” Mary demands, training her gun on his chest.
"Oh, this hospital of mine has lots of secrets," he replies, still grinning madly. "You came close to finding one of them -" he gestures to the CCTV set in the corner near the ceiling "- but not close enough." His grin turns into a giggle. "I have to say, I did enjoy watching Agent Hooper patching you up, Miss Morstan, although…" His tongue darts out, slides along his upper lip, "I much preferred watching you bleed."

"What’s that old saying? Turnabout is fair play?" Molly interjects with a nod at Mary, who’s not bothering to hide her fury. "Let us out and maybe you won’t have to find out how it feels rather than just how it looks."

He clucks his tongue. "Shoot me and you’ll find yourself stuck in here rather longer than you might think, since this wing is waiting for renovation that only I can sign off on. Closed until then and trust me ladies, dying of thirst is not the best way to go." He leers at them, then makes a potentially fatal mistake by adding, “And don’t expect the cavalry to come riding in to save you, since your boss’s brother-in-law has already taken care of Holmes and whoever else it is you two dragged into this with you.”

If he ever had the upper hand he’s lost it now, Molly realizes. Morstan’s kept a cool head about her but those last words are apparently too much for her. Her guns has been trained unwaveringly on Smith’s chest this whole time; as his lips stretch in another revolting smile she hisses, “Fuck you, Smith,” squeezes the trigger and fires. The look frozen onto Smith’s face as she shoots him is worth it-

Unfortunately, it’s at that moment that the doors to the morgue slide open and a familiar, somewhat bedraggled form appears.

“Irene!” Mary gasps, arms coming out to hold up the wounded woman.

“I may have made an error in judgement,” Adler murmurs, but before she can further clarify Mary hears a distant boom and every light in the morgue goes out.

_Meanwhile…_

_Who Knows How Much Later and Farther Away…?_

Sherlock opens his eyes and, not for the first time in his life, finds himself tied down and seriously reviewing his choices in life.

Judging by the groans beside him, Jawn is doing likewise.

He tries to move his wrists, his ankles. No go, both are tied down. Next he tries to raise his head, but it too has been tethered; from what he can see, he's restrained on an operating table, the old fashioned kind that went out with the Blitz. _Let nobody say that Smith lacks a flair for the dramatic_, he muses darkly. The room around him is freezing, a white neon cube that makes his eyes hurt just to look at; he can see his breath pluming before him and as he shivers, he belatedly realizes that his shirt has been opened. Two small suction cups rest against his skin, one over his chest, the other at his side. They are both clearly wired up to something which looks like-

"Is that a car battery?" Watson’s voice croaks beside him.

He hadn't even realized the other man was conscious.

"Looks like," Sherlock answers, his voice equally hoarse. "Joy." He tries to raise his head, look at his companion; he's partially successful. The soldier's head has been shaved, as has his moustache; he's dressed merely in a flimsy hospital gown, something Sherlock knows bodes no good, not
considering Smith's little... fetish for hospital paraphernalia. He is not, however, hooked up to anything electrical.

Watson notices him looking, tries to crack a smile. "Keep on staring, posh boy," he says, "and people will talk."

Sherlock can't help but shoot him a smile. "Nonsense," he says. "You're not nearly pretty enough for me, Jawn-"

The other man snorts. "But am I pretty enough for Mary?" he retorts. "That's the question." He narrows his eyes, expression sobering. "Can you move?"

"No."

"Are you injured?"

"No." Sherlock looks at him. "Are you wearing underpants or trousers?"

Watson cocks an eyebrow. "No." He gives him another wry smile, some of the tension dissipating.

"Apparently Smith's not all that taken with the sight of my bare legs," Sherlock drawls, something which draws a dry chuckle from Watson.

Immediately, he starts coughing; immediately Sherlock regrets it.

*Culverton bloody Smith is going to pay for this.*

"Do you think you can walk?" he asks. "If I can get us out of here?"

Watson tests his bonds, pulling at the ones restraining his legs. "Doesn't feel like anything is broken," he says. "So yes." He frowns. "If I have to bloody drag myself, I can."

Sherlock nods. *That sounds like the voice of experience.* "Let's hope it doesn't come to that." He jerks his chin towards the space above the door, a tiny gesture which John nevertheless follows. "I think they're watching us," he says. "Camera's over there-"

"Which means we don't have a lot of time to work on this," John finishes. "What do you have in mind?"

Sherlock doesn't answer. Rather, he rocks his weight from one side of the operating table to the other, and to his relief, the table moves with him. *Not nailed down,* he thinks. *Sloppy, sloppy, sloppy, Smith...*

He starts rocking the table haphazardly, trying to turn it on its side. Taking his cue, Watson starts doing the same, bouncing his table until both tip over with an almighty crash. The way they've landed, he and John are now facing one another, and as luck would have it Sherlock's hands are now near one of John's restraints. Twisting himself painfully, he manages to pull at the other man's bonds, fingers just about reaching. It's slow, painful going; the leather tears into his wrists as he yanks and pulls. Nevertheless, he manages to grasp the edge of John's left restraint, to pull at the metal buckle. John bounces his table a little closer; Sherlock redoubles his efforts, the wrist he's using turning raw and bloody as he works. Eventually he uses the blood as a lubricant, pulls his hand through the cuff-loop and free-

"Et voila!" he announces smugly.
"Jesus," John mutters, "you are a wanker."

Nevertheless, Holmes quickly unlocks the cuff and once he does so John returns the favor, opening both of his. He's about to start on the ankle restraints when the door opens: to Sherlock's surprise, John doesn't hesitate. He picks up the table with his free hands, twisting the ankle restraints painfulturly in the process, and, holding the table upright before him like a battering ram, lunges towards the door with it.

It knocks aside the person about to enter and wedges the door temporarily shut; the momentary distraction allows Sherlock to get entirely free and prop his own table at the door even as he unlocks John's ankle restraints. This frees up the smaller man to start looking for a weapon (and another exit), while Sherlock pulls the wires attaching him to the car battery from his bare chest. From the other side of the door he can hear swearing, the sound of a heavy body knocking itself against the wedged-shut door. Nevertheless, their obstacles hold and to his immense relief, the soldier returns to him with what look like two large bone saws. So no other exit, then.

"You know how to use that?" he asks, handing one to Sherlock.

Holmes cocks an eyebrow. "Needs must when the devil drives," he says drily. "On the count of three?"

"One, two, three!" And as John nods he pulls aside his operating table, John doing likewise. There's a loud yell and a massive mountain of a man Sherlock recognizes as one of Jimmy's boys tumbles into the room, his momentum from trying to break through the door carrying him forward. Sherlock doesn't hesitate: he grabs the back of the man's skull, fingers digging into his hair, and knocks him groundwards, using his own weight against him. He lands adroitly on his back, planting his knee against it, and with one hand smacks the man's nose into the ground viciously - three short blows. Then, as the man lies bleeding, he removes his gun from his holster and shoots him through the shoulder.

The blood spatters wetly against his bare skin.

"Not going for the head?" John asks, stepping over him and grabbing hold of the second thug at the door, ramming his head into the metal doorway before relieving him of his firearm, too. The man swings for John, his face a mess of blood and bone, and the soldier doesn't hesitate: he shoots his opponent straight through the chest.

He drops like a stone, his eyes open and staring.

Now it's Watson's hospital smock that's stained with blood.

Sherlock grits his teeth, peering around the door jam and checking for reinforcements. About five besuited men are just rounding the corner, doubtless here to clean up their comrades' mess. At their head is Jimmy Moriarty.

The little bastard is bloody whistling.

"Not supposed to be killing people," he answers Watson, even as he narrows his aim down to Jimmy. "Not giving that bitch Winters an excuse to put me back inside. Besides-" He shoots, dropping one of their assailants whom Moriarty has ducked behind. "we might need to question someone if we want to get out of here- Or find out what's happening to Mary and Molly-"

"Molly," John mutters, laying down another round of cover. Three more of the suits drop and he shoots Holmes a tight look. "Jesus, what do you think has happened to Molly?"
Sherlock shakes his head. "Wherever she is," he says, laying down more fire, "she has Mary with her. She'll be safe-"

His words are somewhat undercut, however, by the sudden sound of feminine crying coming from the corridor.

A scream sounds, high and loud, and it's enough to make Sherlock's blood freeze in his veins.

"Come out to play, Sherlock," Moriarty calls. "Or I gut your girlfriend and leave her for the dogs…"

A cold laugh. "After all, they could always use a new bitch to play with…"

Slowly, cautiously, Sherlock leans out. Scans the corridor. Only two of Moriarty's boys are left, but they're holding a small, feminine figure in front of them, approximately the same build and height as Molly.

She's covered in a bloody, dirt-streaked body bag and she's been forced to her knees.

"Molly!" John yelps but Sherlock holds him back.

"That could be anybody," he calls to Moriarty. "Let me see her face and maybe we can come to some arrangement."

Moriarty tuts, shakes his head. "Now now, Will," he sing-songs. "You know I don't negotiate-"

And without warning he reaches into his jacket. Pulls out his firearm and empties a clip right into the woman in front of him.

For a moment times seems to halt, to stand still, horror screaming through Sherlock even as he tries to tell himself that that wasn't Molly- *There is absolutely no proof that was Molly*-.

And then suddenly John Watson's in the corridors, firing at all and sundry. Yelling as loudly as he can that Moriarty is going to pay. Sherlock ducks back, swearing to himself and cursing the fact that the army man and his little tantrum are probably going to get both of them killed-

Which is when a door opens into the corridor in front of him, and Sherlock spots the last person he expected to see again tonight: Irene Adler, gun in her hand and one finger pressed to her crimson painted lips…

Chapter End Notes

Thank you as always for your wonderful comments. Hope you enjoyed this action-packed hobbitsdoitbetter chapter as much as I did!
Relieved though he is at the knowledge that they have an ally, Sherlock still can't seem to move. He stands and stares, feeling rooted to the spot.

*That's not- That's not-

*He refuses to believe that Jim just shot his Molly.*

Irene gestures for him to join her - why? *Oh, she's trying to help, isn't that novel?* - but he merely shakes his head. He can't - he won't go off with her and leave Jawn to Jim's tender mercies (or possibly vice versa)? He can't leave, not with the question of whether Jim just shot Molly still ricocheting around in his head. So he curls his lip in disdain and gives Irene a barely perceptible shake of the head.

*No.*

She frowns. Gestures more emphatically from behind the door, eyes narrowed, nostrils flaring with impatience. He holds out his hand, demanding her gun, and she flips him her best two fingered salute, again gesturing for him to come with her.

She appears to have added the words, "bloody wanker," for good measure.

He shakes his head, ignoring her; if she isn't going to actually do anything more helpful than trying to convince him to run from a fight - which, if she knew him as well as certain others, she would know was a lost cause - then there's no point in wasting any more time with her.

Besides, if he knows Irene then she'll care nothing about getting anyone other than Mary out. Anyone else will just be collateral damage to her- The Woman has her priorities straight, after all. Which would mean she'd leave Molly - *should that not be who Jim just shot* - and Sherlock can't risk that.

*He ignores how patently, absurdly sentimental this thought makes him, squaring his shoulders*
instead. Preparing to move back into the fight.

*That's not Molly, he tells himself. I know it's not.*

*And he does.*

The why of it will turn up later, he tells himself. *I'll just start kicking the shite out of Jimmy and his boys now.*

So he moves forward, swinging a heavy punch towards the nearest of Jimmy’s thugs. Letting his frustration and worry come out in the way he's most comfortable with. He knocks the first thug to the ground and lets loose a stinging flurry of kicks to his kidneys to make him stay down before turning his attention to the next target.

Violence is so much easier than wondering what he's just seen.

He keeps his brother-in-law, who's pressed against one wall while his remaining henchmen try to subdue the furious John Watson, in his peripheral vision, just to be on the safe side. Not that Jawn needs such care: Despite his freshly-shaved head and arse hanging out of the hospital gown there's nothing humorous about the Major. He's lost the gun but somehow managed to hold onto the bone saw, which he's putting to good use on one minion while his foot connects with the other man's groin hard enough to double him over.

Jimmy giggles at the sight, like a child seeing a magic trick.

John hears this and takes a moment to toss the nearest object to hand - a heavy metal bed pan - at him, but Jim just ducks and giggles some more.

He dances back, feet skidding through the puddle of blood starting to leak through the bag he claims he had Molly in, moonwalking filthy streaks into the pale white of the hospital floor. Humming a tune under his breath.

"Figured it out yet, Will?" Jim calls out, gesturing to the body in front of him. The one he wants Sherlock to believe is Molly.

*The little bastard is enjoying this.*

Sherlock grits his teeth, unwilling to admit that he has not. *What he has, he realizes, is mere faith.* But faith is not, never has been, enough for him. *It's not Molly, why do I know it's not her?* he asks himself. *Think, Sherlock, you bloody fool - think! It's not Molly, it's not Molly, it's not...* 

It comes to him as he watches Jim moonwalk another bloody trail along the floor.

Relief, rage and smugness roll together in his chest, that he’s figured it out.

"It's not Molly!" Sherlock calls out as John gets back to his feet and aims the weapon at Moriarty, a look of wild grief contorting his face.

His anger is making him sloppy, which is, of course, what Jim wants.

"John!" Sherlock calls again, louder, when it appears the other man doesn't hear him. "It's not Molly." He glares at Jim, covering his own relief at this realization with anger. "It's not Molly." He cocks his weapon, holding it at Jim's head as a different sort of anger washes away his relief. "This woman -" he gestures at the bag "- she's taller than Molly but the body bag distorts her height and proportions just enough to fool us; her knees are slightly bent, probably tied that way, hands tied
behind her back, head hunched down on her shoulders, all just to trick us into thinking it was Molly."

"Oh, well done, brother in law!" Jim says, eyes fairly glowing with manic glee, unbothered by the two guns he's now facing. "Can't put one over on you!" He cocks his head to one side. "Well, at least, not for long. Had you going for a moment though." His voice turns coaxing. "Come on, admit it. You thought I'd offed your little plaything and it made you go all funny inside."

"Who is it, then?" John demands back on his feet, the gun held steadily in two hands. "You bastard, who did you kill just to play this sick trick on us? And where the fuck are Molly and Mary?"

His face goes pale as a thought seems to occur to him, and Sherlock cuts him off before he makes his next wild accusation.

"Soldiers today," he says, to remind John of who he is. To steady him. "Mary's not much taller than Molly, it's not her," he says. "Probably some charity patient Smith put out of their misery."

Jim makes an exaggerated pout of disappointment, shakes his head, tsks a couple of times. "Oh Sherlock, Sherlock, you're slipping. Surely you don't think I'd be so lazy as to just make use of the first corpse to come along! No, no, you'd probably take one whiff and deduce that the decomp was too far gone or something."

Sherlock's gut tightens as he realizes what Moriarty is telling him - without actually telling him. "It's someone I know, someone we both know," he says slowly, mind racing through the possibilities. "Someone we both -"

He falls silent as he makes the connection. He rather wishes he had not.

Jim nods encouragingly. "That's it, I knew you'd get there eventually. She was a lovely asset, but I'm afraid her usefulness came to an end after she told me about the shooting at the club and how cosy you and Major Pain-in-the-Arse here were getting. I mean seriously, Will. What do you think this is, an episode of Scooby Doo? Whatever made you think that shacking up with Pink Hair and Tiny Tits was a good idea?" He leers at John. "Although, from what little Janine sniveled while we were romancing, it sounds to me like you were just itching to see if Mary'd dyed her other head of hair the same shade." He clucks his tongue. "Too bad you'll never find out."

John makes an aborted move toward Jim - when is he going to stop letting the little bastard goad him? - but the news that the person inside the body bag isn't Molly - or Mary - seems to have helped calm that hair-trigger temper of his. Sherlock's not about to give him time to figure out who it actually is. The good Major might have only met Janine once but he suspects he isn't the type to take the death of even a casual acquaintance lightly. (Funny, he's known Janine longer and just as intimately as he has Molly but her death, while tragic, doesn't really affect him - and he's not inclined to try to figure out why.)

"Molly and Mary," he barks out. "Take us to them." He cocks his gun. "Now."

He wishes - he really, really wishes - that they didn't need the Irish bastard alive to find the missing women. He really, really wishes he could just squeeze the trigger and be done with it, but he can't. Not if he wants to trade him for Euri. And Wee Jimmy knows this, knows he has them over a barrel, that he's immune to any harm from them - or rather, he thinks he does.

Time to disabuse him of that notion.

"We may need you alive but we don't necessarily need you whole," Sherlock says, doing his best to
sound bored, disinterested, even though he knows he's already given the game away by his reaction to Janine's death. When he thought she was Molly.

"So tell us where Molly and Mary are, else I'll suggest Major Watson aim his gun a wee bit lower -" he cups his own balls in a lewd, pointed gesture - "and we both know how much you value that part of your anatomy. Well," he amends with a smirk, "we know how much Euri values it." He makes sure to hold Jimmy's gaze as he adds in his most mocking tones, "She certainly didn't marry you for your brains."

Moriarty's face momentarily contorts in a snarl of rage, which he quickly smooths away into bland indifference meant to match Sherlock's expression. "Fine." He flicks an imaginary piece of lint from his cuff. "They're in Smith's favourite room, where we'll all end up eventually," he says cryptically. Another devilish smile. "It's rather Euri's favorite as well, you know."

The sound of a door clicking shut alerts Sherlock that Irene has left. Trust her to wait and gather intel rather than help. "Oh for God's sake," he mutters as he sees Jim's eyes flicker toward the source of that noise before returning to the two men waiting less than patiently for his answer. Jim smiles a beatific smile, managing to do what Sherlock would have deemed impossible: further piss off John Watson. Baring his teeth in a taunting mockery of a grin, the Irishman says, "Just so you know, they're probably already in pieces by now." Another leer. "Little pink hairy pieces."

John's finger convulses on the trigger and Sherlock steps forward with a shout, expecting to see Jim's brains spattered all over the wall behind him.

Unbelievably however, only a loud click sounds: the gun is out of ammo.

Jim laughs even as John raises his fist, ready to slam his head against the wall in lieu of shooting him, but Sherlock moves forward. Grabs the major's arm. Wrenches it back and away from Jim's hateful, taunting face. "No," he says as John turns his snarling face toward his. "Fun later. Lots of fun later, if you want: Euri will probably pay you to." He ignores the scoffing sound Jim makes. "But right now Jimmy boy's going to take us to Smith's favourite room. No more riddles, no more puzzles. Let's go."

He releases John, grabs Jim by the collar and pushes him roughly forward, his gun jammed into the other man's side.

They start to walk away, Sherlock hoping they've given Irene enough of a head start to make sure Jim's prediction is as false as everything else about the vile little toe-rag. They turn down one hall and then another, stopping in front of a lift. Trooping inside, wee Jimmy presses the 'down' button, cementing Sherlock's suspicion as to their destination into a certainty.

It was the mention of Euri liking it that gave it away.

Sherlock notices that he leaves bloody, slick footprints as he walks, which he can't help but think will prove helpful later on - The little fucker's going to have trouble sneaking away once he's ceased to be useful.

Jim gives an exaggerated sigh of pleasure. "I always did love going down; just ask your sister, Billy Boy." He chortles at his own joke, not at all deterred by the way Sherlock glowers at him. The floor numbers slide by and John somehow manages to figure it out without having it explained to him. "The mortuary? They're in the bloody morgue?"

Jim shrugs. "Let's find out, shall we?"

And gestures grandly toward the doors as they finally reach their floor.
As he does, the lights in the lift start to flicker and dim, just as they had earlier. *Does he have the entire bloody hospital wired to his personal preferences?* Sherlock wonders. *Some kind of SuperVillain™ remote control in his pocket?* Before he can make a sarcastic comment to that effect, the lift jolts to a stop, staggering them all. The doors slide open, a cacophony of noise and gunfire appearing before them.

Turns out, Culverton Smith's favourite room is under siege.

From the darkness Jimmy mutters an an annoyed, "Oh for fuck's sake, not now!" as he tries to pulls back and disappear into the lift. Showing a remarkable degree of sense, however, John grabs him and forces him in front of both he and Sherlock, turning him into a human shield.

"You have point," he barks at Sherlock. "I'll keep Skippy here in one piece until we can figure out what's going on."

Sherlock opens his mouth to answer but before he can the room explodes in a mess of gunfire and loud, guttural Northern Irish swearing…

**Chapter End Notes**

Thank you as always for your wonderful reviews and comments. We live for that stuff, trust me!

**End Notes**

Each chapter will contain a link to an 80s hit for your listening enjoyment.

Please [drop by the archive and comment](#) to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!