All I want for Christmas......

by sherlock221Bismymuse

Notes

Gifted to LadyGlinda and eloquated for having set off the Christmas countdown with their stories! And to make up for all those 'poor Mycie' fics in the recent weeks :) Also as proof that we use only 10% of our brain because 90% is occupied by Sherlock fandom stuff.....and of course I can write Mollcroft and Holmescest WIPs simultaneously hahaha while also managing a family and holding down a job.....cos tis the season to be jolly falalalalalalalalala

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So, 19 chapter into the fic I get this gorgeous gift back from the generous eloquated. Thank you !!! My cup runneth over :)

https://tinyurl.com/yctkgcoa
Sherlock shivered in anticipation and even a bit of terror.

Tonight was going to change his life. One way or another.

He had seen, he had observed, he had deduced. Now he had to know.

He simply could not continue like this anymore.

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He had strategized.

He had chosen a holiday when studies showed that most people who lived alone were emotionally vulnerable.

(Yes that was manipulative and underhand but hey, didn’t the ordinary people always say that all was fair in love and war??!) 

He had chosen to go to over to the other one’s house so as to allow him the home advantage and make him more relaxed.

He had chosen to wear his purple shirt because he had noticed that it had been appreciated.

He has this strong urge to pace up and down on the pavement outside his house when suddenly his own observations came back to him.

Oscillating on the pavement. A love affair.

With great effort he stopped himself, sure that he was being watched on the security camera. He paused, stood in front of the door and knocked.

Of course, it was opened almost at once.

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“Hello Mycroft.” he said.
Chapter 2

Chapter Summary

Mycroft wonders why Sherlock has come over.

“Welcome, brother mine,” said Mycroft, polite as ever, hiding the doubt and worry in his eyes at this utterly unexpected occurrence.

He opened the door and let Sherlock step in, out of the cold and led him through the hallway.

He had been puzzled ever since Sherlock had texted him that morning in his abrupt and demanding way.

Dinner at your place today, 7 pm.

No ‘is it ok if’ .... no ‘do you have other plans’.

Mycroft had sighed.

Of course Sherlock knew he had no other plans. What plans could he possibly have for Christmas? Their parents had gone to France, to be with Lestrade and his parents of all the people. Mummy had said sadly she could not bear to plan a family Christmas dinner that year.

Mrs. Hudson had gone to her sister’s and John Watson had been forced on a holiday by Harry, taking Rosie with him.

So Sherlock was probably alone too.

And much as Mycroft had been looking forward to sipping some beautifully aged whiskey and re-reading his favourite book, by the fireplace in his personal library, he supposed it was preferable to have Sherlock in front of his eyes and not have to worry about his brother finding other ways to alleviate his boredom.

Surprising that John had not taken him along. Everyone seemed to think they were a couple. Were they? He wasn’t sure. There was a time when he would have been sure, one way or another.

But now? He worried that he was not always right any more. The disaster with Eurus had made him question his own judgment in a way that nothing else had in his entire life.

He also wasn’t sure how he felt about it if they were indeed a couple but despite the un-forgiveable violence, John still seemed to care for Sherlock.

Unlike that scum Sebastian from Uni.

Mycroft did not believe in any specific higher power called God but sometimes he wondered if there was indeed something that kept his beloved brother alive through all the disasters that
seemed to strike him and those he pushed himself wilfully into.

If Sherlock had heard this question he would have answered--Yes of course there is a higher power keeping me alive.

You.
Chapter 3

Chapter Summary

Sherlock has plans of what he wants to say .....but when the door opens he isn't so sure any more.

Sherlock had planned this intervention rather thoroughly and wanted to argue, to explain, to remind, to interpret.

He wanted to solve this the way he did at the Scotland Yard during cases, with Lestrade and John as his audience.

A bit of brain work, a dash of drama, a flourish of facts and voila!

Brilliant! Amazing! They would always say and applaud.....

But this was Mycroft. The man who had taught him everything he knew and who always, always knew more than him. The man who was the most difficult to impress. Ever.

Would it really be possible to confront Mycroft? To insist on the truth?

He had to.

He was prepared in turn for annoyance, exasperation, protests, frustration, denial, anger---in fact the entire gamut of negative emotions they had managed to incite in each other all their lives.

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What he had never expected was that taking one look at Mycroft when he opened the door and seeing him so fragile, almost vulnerable would make all the well laid plans go flying out of his brain like a swarm of lost bees.

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Sherlock stepped in through the door in a daze and felt the warmth of the fire as soon as he entered the hallway. Then he smelt coq-au-vin……..and cinnamon …...and that derailed his brain.

Wasn’t it what they had eaten that day?

Suddenly he had a rare moment of un-certainty.

How could he be so sure?

That one Christmas he had no memory of……because it had been erased from his Mind Palace.

And which had come back to him in a blinding flash the moment he had pointed the gun towards
himself and seen Mycroft’s frantic expression.

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Could it have been a false memory? Eurus was capable of doing anything.

But… but it had seemed so real as he saw it happen.

They say that when you are about to die, your life flashes in front of your eyes.

And this is what his mind chose to show him? The sum total and the meaning of his entire life?

That Christmas?
Chapter 4

Chapter Summary

Sherlock remembers what happened that Christmas.

Chapter Notes

The story will now jump a bit between the present day Christmas and THAT Christmas in the past, whose memories were locked away in the Mind Palace and have been revealed to Sherlock on that fateful day in Sherringford.

Like a slow motion reel unspooling inside his Mind Palace, he saw a young man sitting in a train.

He could feel the excitement radiating off the young man, the anticipation and then the joy at seeing his brother who had come to pick him up at the station.

He knew it was himself. It wasn’t a false memory. He remembered this feeling.

He remembered looking at Mycroft after all those years and feeling almost faint with the overwhelming heady sensation of desire.

He had thought of him every single day for the past 6 years. He had missed him like an ache. Like a phantom limb.

He had cried himself to sleep because the other bedroom was empty and now he had to confront his own monsters….alone.

He had hated him for abandoning him. He had wanted to hurt him. He had wanted him back with a clawing desperation.

He needed him to make things quiet inside his frenetic mind.

Mycroft had been there of course, in his Mind Palace. The sharp brain and the clever eyes that would look right into him and know his every thought. The soft belly which he would wriggle into when he hugged him. The gentle hands that would ruffle his curls. The sweet voice that would soothe him and read to him and talk away the monsters.

Although he seemed impossibly grown up and mature and perfect to Sherlock, he realized now with a shock that Mycroft had been only 18 when he had left.

His memory zoomed into Paddington Station and saw himself step out of the train and see Mycroft.
Utterly transformed.

Slim, elegant, quietly well-dressed. Grown up. Looking at him and smiling.

That fond expression in his eyes being the only familiar thing from all those years ago.

What a breath-taking sight!

The rest of the world could fade away and disappear and he would never miss it for one second.

“Hello Sherlock.” Mycroft had said, in a deeper more modulated voice than Sherlock remembered and suddenly he found he couldn’t talk at all.

He had just shrugged and nodded in greeting.

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That day in Sherringford, as he looked at this scene from the lens of all those years, he could see, clear as day, what he had missed then, clouded by his own emotions.

The desire was reciprocated!!

Oh Mycroft had hidden it well and quickly, but when one is dying, one’s Mind Palace chooses well what to retain, what to focus on and what to leave out.

There was no doubt about it.

The desire was reciprocated.

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Quickly the other scenes had followed.

The week they had spent together, the fun, the days at Scotland Yard.

*Good heavens, was that Lestrade right there?! Is that how he had first known him? So young and cheerful! Yes, he could feel it in his guts that this was real. So real.*

And then he had watched in horror as the holiday had derailed into something so traumatic he could understand why it had been erased from his Mind Palace. But it all made sense now.

This is exactly how it must have happened and this why Mycroft behaved with him the way he did.

He knew the problem now and only he could solve it.
Chapter 5

Chapter Summary

Mycroft gets ready to host Sherlock on Christmas Day

Back to the present day

Once Mycroft had got used to the idea that it would be the two of them for dinner, he thought he might as well put some effort into it.

He had set the table for two, found the silver candelabra and some black candles (Sherlock would appreciate that touch of the macabre), and their mother’s favourite Wedgewood tableware which she had passed on to him (You will use it Mycroft. Sherlock will probably throw it from the window to examine how it shatters, she had said).

He had always found cooking to be therapeutic but he rarely indulged since he was always so busy and had someone come and cook for him. Besides, cooking for one person was rather boring and tedious.

But today? Today he had set about baking a coq-au-vin in the slow cooker and then mixed a cranberry walnut slaw.

Then he had sliced some apples and mixed them with butter, brown sugar and cinnamon. Just before serving he would pour rum and then a flambé would give a special touch.

After all it was Christmas.

A small voice added and it’s Sherlock. The most special person in your life.

But he had gotten so used to hushing that voice that he barely noticed it as he ignored it but his stomach gave a small lurch.

The entire staff had been given a holiday and he was completely alone at home.

What would he and Sherlock say to each other? Why was he coming anyway?? Would there be accusations? Explanations sought? Demands made?

How long would he stay?

Would he expect to stay the night? Should he offer it? After all it’s not like anyone was waiting for him at Baker Street……
Chapter 6

Chapter Summary

Mycroft settles down by the fireside to reminisce about Christmas through the years.

Being an atheist, Mycroft had no reason to celebrate Christmas over any other festival, and since his Secret Service training was meant to allow him to blend in with almost all cultures when undercover, he could probably do the Namaaz on Eid as fluidly as he would know the moves for a Diwali celebration or Hannukah.

So, his house had nothing to signify that it was the holiday season and Santa Claus had neither a chimney to come down in nor a tree to leave gifts under but despite all that had happened, Sherlock was coming home and that was the biggest gift of them all.

As Mycroft sat by the fire with his favourite purple plush rug on his curled up legs, he sipped his whiskey and reminisced about all the Christmases past.

He remembered the way Sherlock used to tumble out of bed (usually Mycroft’s bed because the little boy ran out of his own bedroom almost every night and came and cuddled with his Mycie). He would then race to the tree searching for his gifts.

From the time he was 3 and had started understanding the concept of gifts, Mycroft had ensured that he made something special for him every year.

The first gift had been an alphabet puzzle he had devised and to his delight Sherlock had learnt the entire alphabet in less than two days using that.

The next Christmas he had made him a kaleidoscope and they had spent hours together in the bedroom, facing the window and looking through it.

His baby brother had been excited out of his mind! ‘Mycie LOOK’ he would say every two seconds and hand over the scope to him, rattling it so much that whatever Mycroft saw was obviously not what he wanted to show him. But his enthusiasm had been contagious and his Mycie had smiled at him fondly and ruffled his wild curls and tried to stop him from falling off the bed in his excitement.

The gifts had become more complicated as the years passed (including an abacus, a solar powered toy car, a telescope, a magnetic levitation model and a home lab).

Alongside these they had worked on coding and decoding, deductions, chemistry, astronomy, languages and everything under the sun.

They had been inseparable.
Mycroft had helped him build his Mind Map to connect and organize all the information and to be able to recognize patterns.

He remembered how Sherlock, impetuous and grand in his thinking even as a kid as declared ‘Map’ to be so BORING and so they had had some discussion and agreed that it would be Mind ‘Palace’ instead!

Mycroft could of course read every thought that flitted across Sherlock’s mind. Sometimes even before the boy himself was aware.

Sherlock had also become good at reading Mycroft although he never got as good at it. To some extent it was because he trusted him so completely that he never felt the need to want to trace and track every thought.

And more so because he knew with confidence that most of those thoughts were about him.
Chapter 7

When Mycroft had left for college, Sherlock had been distraught.

He simply could not believe that something as stupid and mundane as his age could prevent him from following Mycroft to college! College!! He couldn’t follow him to college?! When he was willing to follow him to the ends of the earth?!!! What sense did such rules make?!

And then Mycroft had tried to reason with him.

Which had seemed like the worst betrayal. Mycroft wanted to leave?! He wanted Sherlock to stay behind? And to top it all he wanted him to UNDERSTAND?? Understand what??

That separation was inevitable? That caring was not an advantage?

“I hate you!!” the teen Sherlock had raged at him the day before he left. “Don’t ever come back. I don’t need you. I am fine alone!!”

Mycroft had never been able to forget the sight of Sherlock angry and crying and refusing to look at him as he left. He looked at Mummy as if asking for a solution.

He had a split second of genuinely considering not leaving home……..surely he could manage somehow….

But Mummy said they both needed to deal with the reality of the separation. She may have said something like Adversity builds character but he wasn’t paying real attention.

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Since then things had gone downhill over the years, with resentment and the bitter taste of betrayal tainting all of Sherlock’s memories, while guilt and desperation marred all of Mycroft’s.

He overate to comfort himself and he worked thrice as hard to keep his brain occupied.

For the next four years Sherlock avoided him when he went back for Christmas and ignored all his presents.

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Mycroft had long discussions with Sherlock in his Mind Palace and tried to reason with him, to understand what he could do to persuade him and eventually decided he needed to stay away and leave him alone since that was what he wanted.

Alone protects us, he decided to believe. His work was becoming more and more risky anyway and he would prefer that Sherlock was not in any danger because of proximity to him.

But he had not reckoned with the power of his heart over his logical brain.

And so, that December, Mycroft finally caved.
Chapter 8

Chapter Summary

Two hearts beating as one.

He had called to inform Mummy that this year also he would be unable to come home for Christmas. Mummy had given up expecting him and understood the constraints of his work even if it exasperated her that she could not see her older son as often as she would want to.

Dutiful as ever, he had then enquired after father and then after Sherlock.

Somehow that day instead of giving him the usual ‘Oh he is fine’ answer she told him that Sherlock had taken to sleeping in Mycroft’s bedroom at nights. And the violin wailing at all odd hours.........

“He doesn’t have a single friend Mycie.” she said to him sadly.

That broke Mycroft’s heart.


Mycroft had recognized early on, that just like for him, there were no ‘peers’ in the real sense for Sherlock either. His lack of filters made him unpopular and although he himself never expressed any desire to make friends with anyone (other than Mycroft--who was his best friend), Mycroft did worry about his capacity to socialize and develop social skills.

“You must at least try Lock. Talk to people, show interest in their lives, participate”. He had told the sulking pre-teen during one of the holiday breaks.

Sherlock had given him a withering glance. “You want me to waste my time and energy engaging with goldfish Mycie? Show an interest in what? Gossip over who spoke to whom and who is doing what and speculate why? I can deduce all that for myself within minutes and also avoid slow and boring conversations.”

Then a scathing accusation. “Are you telling me this to get rid of me? Do I bore you now that you are ‘grown up’ ?”

But there was a slight tremor in that voice which pained Mycroft to hear.

“No !! Lock, dearest. Never! Come here.” and he had held out his hand and Lock had come to him and hugged him.

Who needed friends when they had each other?
But now his brother was so lonely. And he was missing him so much that he had taken to sleeping in his room alone? He needed to make it up to him. It didn’t matter how long the silence had stretched between them...... All it needed was one word to break it.

And if he needed to be the one to break down first, he was more than willing.

Anything for Sherlock.

So on an impulse he asked Mummy if she would send him up to London for the week before Christmas. His flat was really small but they could figure it out.

As soon as he said it he realized how intensely he wanted it to happen.

Mummy had agreed instantly. Anything to keep her younger one from brooding, picking at his food and setting fire to the house with his experiments.

Mycroft kept the phone down and realized how much he was looking forward to spending time with Sherlock. He hoped he would agree to come down to London.

He remembered how the hero worship of his younger brother used to make him feel thrilled (and bit scared --if he could admit that to himself after all these years). To be regarded as so perfect and infallible by this beautiful, innocent and adorable boy had weighed heavily on Mycroft in those years.

He had been worried that comparisons were inevitable and that someone sometime was bound to say something in Sherlock’s presence that would make him resentful.

Mycroft had been not only top of his class every year but he had overtaken his teachers by the time he was in the 8th grade. He retained everything with his photographic memory and what he did not know he read up and analysed and was soon so beyond the capacity of the school that they had recommended him for a special fast track course at Cambridge.

But somehow, against all odds, there had been no resentment, no sibling rivalry. Sherlock had always been inordinately proud of him and in his eyes he could do no wrong.

When Sherlock was in the third grade the teacher had asked them to make a Valentine’s Day card for someone they loved the most. As expected, most children had made one for their mother or father or one or the other grandparent.

Sherlock had made one with the accurate anatomical heart and shyly given it to Mycroft that evening.

Remembering that moment, 15 years later, Mycroft realized he never stood a chance.

If he lived to be a thousand he would never receive any token of affection so precious and so enormous.
His brother’s heart. In his hands.
So it was that Mycroft went to Paddington station that weekend to pick up Sherlock. His head was filled with fond memories of childhood, and thus he was shocked to see a stunningly handsome, scruffily unshaven, tall, scowling young man step out of the carriage.

He felt his eyes flicker with desire before he recognized that it was Sherlock.

*Good heavens!*

*What had happened in the few years that he had been away?!*

This was a changeling, an angel, a dream.

This was not the adorable scrawny little brother he had left behind.

This was a young man who could model for the cover pages of any leading fashion magazine.

He could sense rather than see how most people on the platform had done a double take at the sight of this beautiful young man walk down. But this young man had eyes only for him. He had given a huge grin when he recognized him but as he came closer he seemed to feel shy and had put out his hand instead of giving him a hug.

‘Hello Sherlock’ said Mycroft, surprised he could speak normally, giving how fast his heart was beating and how faint he was feeling. ‘Hope you had a pleasant ride.’

Sherlock had shrugged and nodded, as if to say it didn’t matter either way, he was here now.

Mycroft smiled. Some things hadn’t changed after all.

If this vision stepped out of the train, can you really blame Mycroft for his feelings??

https://in.pinterest.com/pin/61783826121703550/
Chapter 10

Chapter Summary

Mycroft is juggling emotions, observations and deductions.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

That week would be one of the most difficult ones Mycroft had survived (and he was already involved in global and national intrigue of a scale that even conspiracy theorists cannot dream of.)

He caught himself staring at Sherlock in fascination as though at a stranger, which in some ways he was. The years of enforced separation meant that he could no longer read him as well as he had been able to and found himself often wondering what went on inside the brilliant brain that had once been as familiar as his own.

No one else in the family knew but Uncle Rudi had met him a scant six months ago and dropped an information bombshell on him. Eurus was alive!

Mycroft remembered the horrors she had wrecked upon them like they had happened yesterday. He was amazed at the power of the mind which allowed Sherlock to suppress every single memory of his sister.

He himself had neither had the desire to delete her nor the luxury to do so any more.

Uncle Rudi had made it very clear that his parents were not to be told and frankly, he couldn’t see any reason to do so now either. Although Uncle Rudi had told him that eventually he would have to become her custodian and oversee her incarceration at Sherringford, he had refused to let Mycroft meet her. He said she was still extremely dangerous.

Mycroft had worried about what it meant for him and for Sherlock and if they had truly escaped their genetic bonds.

He would take the opportunity this week to observe Sherlock at close quarters.

Sherlock had been quiet the first day, almost shy and hesitant but by the second day he had become comfortable enough to bombard Mycroft with a hundred questions an hour, had hacked into his laptop, caused a minor disaster in the kitchen trying to concoct some kind blood jelly (where the hell had he procured the blood from?! Mycroft wasn’t sure he wanted to know) and was currently trying to apparently kill himself using electricity or battery fluid from the looks of it.

Mycroft had no idea whether this would be classified as ‘normal’ behaviour for a young man his age or these were the shadowy fingers of Eurus playing games with fire and blood and life.

He decided that prudence demanded they be better safe than sorry.
“Ok, that does it. Sherlock, you have to come with me to the office now and if I can take half a day off we will go out for lunch and then wherever you want. Sounds good?”

Yes, Sherlock had grinned and nodded. Mycroft couldn’t help giving him a pat on the head and Sherlock had pushed his head into his hand like a cat and hummed.

Mycroft had felt himself go hot and cold all over. This was completely ridiculous.

_This young man was his brother._ He may be the most beautiful and brilliant creature he had ever set eyes upon but this……the way he was beginning to feel could surely not be acceptable.

He needed to remind himself of the fact.

So the next time he addressed him, he made sure to call him Brother Mine.

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Somehow that week felt like the longest and the shortest at the same time. He finally understood what Charles Dickens had said in _The Tale of Two Cities._

_It was the best of times. It was the worst of times._

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Sherlock was even more dazzling and incredible and enthusiastic than he remembered. He had brought his violin along and although he needed more practice to be perfect, he was close.

So close.

Mycroft had closed his eyes and floated away on his music and was brought to earth by being poked in the ribs with the bow.

“Hey Mycie, don’t drift off!” followed by what sounded suspiciously like a giggle.

Mycroft had rolled his eyes.

Sherlock was just a constant bundle of contradictions. He could create such sublime ethereal music and then instantly also descend into this childish and juvenile behaviour.

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On one of the days they had gone to the Museum of Natural History but abandoned it rather rapidly, in favour of ‘something more exciting Mycie.’ The London Dungeons it had to be of course.

Mycroft had studied his reactions to all the horrors inside but found himself concluding that the excitement was because they were interesting historically, and not because torture in itself was something that pleased him.

He hoped fervently that he was right.
Later they had walked down the South Bank and eaten some fish and chips. Sherlock loved it with as much enthusiasm as Mycroft found it distasteful. Sherlock had laughed at Mycroft’s expression when he had to hold the greasy paper filled with the food and had offered to eat both their portions.

Then one evening he had taken him to the theatre to see the play---Frankenstein. Sherlock had been fascinated by the scientific potential of the experiment while Mycroft had been thoughtfully contemplating the metaphor behind it.

*A man and his own creation. Against all laws of nature. But all it wanted from him was love. Everyone misunderstood it and attacked it and called it a monster. People often mistook it for a horror story when it was in fact a love story. Of a kind.*

*Wasn’t it? After all, unrequited love made for the most tragic stories.*

Chapter End Notes

Benedict plays the Monster and the Creator in the theatre performance of Frankenstein.
Described as: "Danny Boyle's role-swapping production highlights the incestuous relationship between genius and madness."

So of course I have to write a fic with this as the theme of the Holmescest don't I ?!
Yes, it is already being drafted....so wait for it!
Chapter 11

Chapter Summary

The best way to enjoy something you love is to share it with someone you love.

Chapter Notes

Fasten your seatbelts. We are in for a bumpy ride! The rating has been upped from teen to mature in advance of the next few chapters.

Mycroft had fallen in love with London from the first time he set foot in it. It was not just that it was the pulsating and vibrant hub of power--financial, political, social, but also that it was so beautiful in so many serendipitous ways.

He loved the hidden corners of the city, the secrets and the history.

Sometimes he was convinced he almost loved the rain too.

He was often involved in assignments where he had to go abroad and the best part of the safe return was for him, always, that first breath he would take on arrival into the city. The very air of London seemed to bring him back to life, every single time.

There was no one else he could share this with. No one else who would understand that it was precisely the demons that walked under the streets that made this city so wonderful for him.

So when Sherlock had come to stay, he had wanted so much to share this love with him and although he had to spend his days at work, he tried to explore as much of it with him as he could.

He took him on long walks every evening of course, despite the cold, but they also travelled by the Underground. Mycroft had explained to him the secret behind the map. He bought him a book on its history from the Transport Museum at Covent Garden and Sherlock had devoured the book and learnt the entire map later that evening.

“Did you know there is an abandoned station called Sumatra Road?” He had asked Mycroft, fascinated as always by tricks and puzzles and odd facts.

“Yes”, Mycroft had replied. “Also York Station, Down Street, British Museum, Tower of London and quite a few more.”

“Yessss”, Sherlock had replied, eyes bright with the excitement of new information. “But those were all opened and then shut. This one was shut even before it opened!”
Mycroft had smiled at him indulgently. Looked like London had claimed one more for her own.

The next day he had also shown Sherlock how to read the A to Z. He had explained to him that London cab drivers have to learn this entire map before they get a license. So of course Sherlock had taken up the challenge and devoted himself to learning it up, 20 pages a day.

Mycroft had learnt it years ago, obviously, and would randomly test Sherlock off and on.

“So what is the shortest route to go from Baker Street to Buckingham Palace?”

Sherlock would tilt his head to the left, think for a second and rattle off “Well if you wanted to walk or cycle you need to go south towards Crawford Street……but if you take the Jubilee Line from Baker Street station and get down at Green Park……”

“Hmm.” Mycroft would concur. “That’s adequate. What about going from the Westminster Abbey to the Secret Services Office building?”

“Well, one would suppose that the person wanted to get there really quickly and would take a car or taxi, then anticipating road closures on Millbank……”

“Yes. “ Mycroft had conceded. “That would perhaps be the best way, even if not the shortest.”

“Not the shortest?” Sherlock quizzed him, annoyed at himself for not knowing. Then realization dawned. “Oh! Is there a secret passage??!”

“There certainly is.” Mycroft told him, delighted at his excitement. “It runs from St Margaret’s Church and was built by the monks in the 12th century.”

Sherlock looked at him with wonder in his eyes and said “I love London.”

Something shifted inside Mycroft at that moment. He had missed this. He had missed him.

It was like a part of him that had been lost for so long had found its way back again. He had been so incomplete, all alone.

And then, in his mind’s eye, he had a glimpse of the perfect life.

Both of them living in London. Loving the city. And each other.

Then he blinked and reality seeped in like an acid, turning that picture postcard image to ashes.
1. Sumatra Road is an imaginary Tube station used in The Empty Hearse as part of the clues to solve the London terror attack, but the other closed stations are real.
https://londonist.com/2016/05/the-history-of-the-tube-map

2. This part of the story is set in the late 1990s, so it's hard copy books all the way

3. Shameless plug for another fic I wrote about these two earlier: Mind the Gap. Not exactly London focussed like this chapter but reminded me of the hook which I built this story around.

https://archiveofourown.org/works/15734553/chapters/36583227
Chapter 12

Chapter Summary

Sherlock meets Greg.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

On Thursday there was a crisis at work and Mycroft was not going to be able to take Sherlock along.

He thought about the various options and leaving him alone all day wasn’t one of them. Not if he wanted a live-able flat when he got back.

So he had called Sergeant Gregory Lestrade.

He knew him from work and while he was certainly competent at his work, he was also a balanced and helpful man. Greg was older than him but they had become friends. (Or as friendly as Mycroft could allow himself to be with anyone.)

Greg had cheerfully agreed to ‘babysit’ his brother, never knowing then that this day would be the catalyst for Sherlock’s future transformation. And perhaps even his redemption.

That evening Mycroft had returned home to an empty flat and his heart had sunk at the thought that in a few more days this would be his daily reality. Alone. Again.

He telephoned Gregory to find out what had happened and where his brother was and was answered with a hearty laugh.

“You’ve lost him mate. He doesn’t want to leave Scotland Yard! Looks like you two brothers have some genetic attraction to the gory and the sinister. He is going through my cold case files like they were paperback novels. Can’t shift him. Why don’t you come over in an hour and we can go out for a bite?”

Mycroft’s heart had clenched at the comment about the genetic attraction to the gory and the sinister. Eurus had been only 5 when she had displayed all those signs. Could it be possible that one of them could express it later? Would either of them ever be free from the shadows of this legacy?

But he had agreed to go over and had really enjoyed himself. He was delighted to find that Sherlock’s fascination had been not so much with the crime itself but in the clues and finding the solutions.

His heart gently un-clenched itself.
He sat and observed the two of them—Sherlock, bursting with questions and theories and Greg, despite being almost 10 years older, never talking down to him, answering him with the patience of a saint, not taking offence at his abrupt manner and even joking indulgently.

“Where did the two of you study anyway?? The Encyclopaedia Britannica School for Boys?” Greg had turned to Mycroft and asked him at one point, laughing, when Sherlock had offered some obscure reference.

Later, as they were leaving, Sherlock gave the Sergeant a painfully shy look and asked if he could drop in again tomorrow. Greg said he would let him know and the smile on Sherlock’s face made Mycroft’s blood run cold.

He wanted to be the recipient of that look. He wanted to be wanted by him.

He couldn’t blame Sherlock for having a crush on Gregory. After all, the man was handsome and patient and intelligent and all kinds of wonderful. But if he were not already engaged to be married, he could have wooed Sherlock while Mycroft never could, even though he was single.

He could love Sherlock with every fibre of his being but it was a love that could never dare to speak its name.

Chapter End Notes

Please don't focus on the days of the week in the next few chapters. Even I don't know now finally how many days Sherlock ends up staying in London!! And I just wrote the days as they came they to me :)
Chapter 13

Chapter Summary

What does Mycroft want? What does Sherlock want?

If Mycroft’s days were made of enjoyable companionship and a cautious kind of happiness, the nights were full of dreams that were dark and passionate and full of an inexpressible longing.

There was smoke and mist and moonlight. Sometimes Sherlock appeared as an angel, sometimes as a magical creature with black wings. But when Mycroft reached out, he was always just outside his grasp and once when he thought he could finally touch him, he found himself in freefall, disappearing into an endless abyss.

Mycroft woke up gasping from these dreams, always needing a minute for his heart rate to return to normal.

One night he had woken up like that to find Sherlock standing there, leaning against the door frame, looking like a tousled Greek God, staring at him.

Mycroft rubbed his eyes. Yes. He was still there.

“Sherlock?” he called out, his voice still hoarse from sleeping.

“You were calling my name.” said Sherlock.

“Oh was I?” Mycroft had a moment of utter panic. What in heaven’s name had he said? How long had Sherlock been standing there? How much had he heard?

He tried to dismiss it as a joke. “Must have been a nightmare then” he said lightly.

“Hmm. Do you often moan in your nightmares?” his brother asked.

Mycroft flushed. “Even I can’t control what my subconscious chooses to reflect on while I am asleep Sherlock.”

“Yes of course” said Sherlock smoothly. “But you are not asleep now are you?” And he came inside the room.

Suddenly Mycroft was on full alert. This was a dangerous situation. Commence negotiations.

“I am going to go back to sleep now Sherlock and I suggest you should also.” said Mycroft sternly.

To his surprise Sherlock hesitated and then turned around and left.

The next morning he heard Sherlock on the phone.
“Yes, I am going to stay for some more days. Yes everything is fine Mummy. We are having fun, yes.” Mycroft could almost hear the eye roll when he said ‘fun’.

“What are you doing??” He asked Sherlock. “Who said you could stay for more days? Don’t you want to be home for Christmas?”

“Are you going to throw me out Mycroft?” Sherlock asked him in a bored voice. “Don’t be tedious.”

Mycroft’s head was reeling.

What had happened to his sweet little brother? Who was this rebellious young man pushing boundaries, challenging him, making his own plans?

One part of his brain reminded him that, well he is not a child any more. You may be his big brother but he is also a young man now. He will be 20 in a few weeks. You knew what you wanted when you were 20. So does he.

But the other part of his brain was asking….what DOES he want??
Chapter 14

Chapter Summary

Mycroft is still trying to figure out how to deal with his mercurial brother.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Sherlock spent all his time at Scotland Yard for the next three days and Mycroft hardly saw him. Then on Friday he woke up late.

“Not going to the Yard today?” Mycroft asked him as he got ready to leave for work.

“No. Lestrade is busy and Sally hates me. I think she has a crush on him and is jealous of me.”

Mycroft knew he shouldn’t ask the next question but he did. Very calmly, as though he didn’t really care. “Is there any reason she should be jealous?”

Sherlock gave him the ‘don’t be an idiot’ look. “Anyway, I am coming with you today.”

“No you are not! I have meetings all day. Why don’t you spend the day at the British Library? Here take my patron card and enter as a guest. This will allow you access to the rare books and manuscripts including the Voyenich”.

Sherlock’s eyes lit up. “Really?! That would be amazing!” he said, grinning.

Mycroft wondered if R.L Stevenson’s Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde could possibly be true. Now that he knew about Eurus, he was constantly was on edge whenever he saw any signs that Sherlock may become like her. Sherlock seemed to be made of matter and anti-matter. Dark energy and incandescent light.

But just now, standing here and grinning, he looked just like the boy Mycroft remembered and it warmed his heart. So he gave him an indulgent smile. “Then shall we meet at Euston Station at 6 pm and go out for dinner?”

Yes Sherlock nodded and then suddenly held his hand. “Thank you Mycie.”

Mycroft could barely keep up with these mood changes any more. It was like playing with quicksilver. Just when you thought you had it pinned down, off it went somewhere else altogether.

It reminded him of the time when Sherlock had been ill and fascinated by the thermometer they were using to check his temperature. As soon as he got better he had found it and broken it to see exactly how it worked. Sherlock had spent days chasing that blob of mercury on pieces of paper, in those days of innocence (ignorance?) before anyone knew mercury could be dangerous.

Mycroft sighed. *What had been that poem about the girl with the curl in the middle of her forehead?*
“When she was good she was very very good…..”

Well heaven knows that could have been about Sherlock......

Chapter End Notes

1. The Voyenich manuscript is an unsolved mystery. It is dated to the 15th century, seems to be written in a language no one knows and is filled with bizarre and mysterious drawings. Obviously Sherlock would love to take a look !! Oh and I just put it in the British Library for this story. The original copy is actually kept in Yale ! Anyway printed and online copies are easily available now https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/6-things-know-about-mysterious-voynich-manuscript-180964847/

2. Dr Jekyll and Mr. Hyde is a novel written in 1885 by Robert Louis Stevenson. It is about a man called Dr Jekyll who has been obsessed with a theory of the duality of good and evil in all human beings. He has discovered a formula that transforms him into his evil side. When he begins to change into Hyde without the chemicals, however, Jekyll despairs, for after he exhausts his supply of chemicals he can no longer transform himself back. As changes back to Hyde for the last time, he kills himself.

3. There was a little girl By Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

There was a little girl, Who had a little curl,
Right in the middle of her forehead.
When she was good, She was very good indeed,
But when she was bad she was horrid.

( As we know, Sherlock is really a girl's name :)
Chapter 15

Chapter Summary

They spend some quality time together and Mycroft can allow himself some feelings of joy.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

When they did meet later that evening, they had a wonderful time and they discussed all the theories around the cipher of the Voyenich. Mycroft was just getting involved in developing computer software for decryption and they discussed Enigma and the Turing test and the world’s first hacker.

Mycroft felt a kind of a high from being able to enjoy the company of a brain as brilliant as his and one which found similar ideas exciting.

They spoke about the cold cases that Sherlock had been reviewing and he told him about a historical unsolved crimes of a certain Amelia Ricoletti.

Mycroft listened with great interest. As they were finishing dinner he said, “I am glad you are getting along with Greg. You can learn a lot from him. And he is good company.”

“Hmm. But I prefer to be with you.”

Mycroft cleared his throat, startled by the unexpected confession.

“That’s nice….I like being with you too Sherlock.”

“But you left me.” Sherlock said, suddenly angry, looking away. “You left me all alone. For years.”

The words came out with great difficulty and it probably caused as much pain for Mycroft to hear them as it was obviously causing Sherlock to say them.

Mycroft wondered again at how to deal with such rapid mood swings. But he spoke softly, in a placatory manner, not wanting to spoil the wonderful evening they had had. “I am sorry Sherlock. I didn’t want to. You know that now don’t you? You have no idea how much I missed you.”

He paused. When there was no response he continued tentatively, saying things he never expected to share. “I missed you every single day Sherlock. If there was any way that I could have left everything and come back…. (to you)… I would have.”

Sherlock didn’t say anything for a minute, as he seemed to be calming himself down. Then with a scowl he asked him, “Why don’t you call me Lock anymore?”

What?! Mycroft thought. But he answered calmly again. “Well, you are not a child any more Sherlock.”
“But it has to do with love….as a special name….not how old I am….. isn’t it? Don’t you love me anymore?”

Once again that mercurial shift in mood, always catching Mycroft unawares.

“Of course I do Sherlock, why would you doubt that?”

“I love you too”. Sherlock said, unexpectedly, looking shy.

“I……I am glad to hear that.” Mycroft said as his stomach clenched.

The words he wanted to hear......but not like this. *What was wrong with him??!*

“Ok let’s go home now!” Sherlock got up suddenly and tugged his hand and they almost ran down to the Tube.

“Sherlock stop!”

Mycroft had to stop. He wasn’t out of breath-- his service training had made him super fit, but he simply couldn’t be seen running down the streets like this.

It could affect his reputation and in his work, that mattered a lot. Without credibility your word had no value and if your word had no value there was no trust.

Without trust you were a dead man.

“Huh, you are no fun anymore.” Sherlock had pouted when Mycroft gave him a disapproving look.

“Come let us go home like civilized people,” Mycroft urged. “And then we can play operation. Or Cluedo.”

And so they had gone home and played for ages and it had been more fun than Mycroft had had in years.

He went to sleep that night with a heart full of something that could be approaching joy.

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It had been impossible for Mycroft to find anyone who came even close to his intellectual capacities once he left home. The one person he had become friendly with had become too emotionally dependant too quickly.

*Clingy* was the word that came to mind.

So Mycroft had moved swiftly to put an adequate distance between them and had since accepted that he was too unique to ever find a peer, let alone someone who could actually challenge him and delight him and whom he would also find attractive.

*Until now….* his reptile brain whispered.

*Shhh* his moral fibres whispered back.

*Sshhh….Sherlock ….whispered back the hind brain.*
That morning for the first time in years, he had given in to the sense of arousal on waking and when he touched himself his waking thought had been Sherlock.

But he had been overwhelmed with a sense of shame and guilt.

He could not. He must not. He would not.

He had to be the sensible one. As always.

(He was tired of being the sensible one).

He would be the one to protect Sherlock from harm.

(He hated the idea that he was becoming the harm he needed to protect him from).

He would be the voice of reason.

(But no one was asking for any explanations! It was all inside the head. The most dangerous place in which to argue and counter argue and be judge, jury and executioner all rolled in one.)

Sherlock deserved better.

(Really??Who was better for him than someone who loved him with every fibre of his being?)

The next day had been uneventful though Mycroft was beginning to feel the strain of the battle inside his brain. He felt like a rubber band that had been stretched to its fullest capacity. It would either spring back or snap now. He was not sure which option was to be preferred at this point.

And then, alarmingly, the decision was taken out of his hands.

Chapter End Notes

1. Enigma reference is of course because Benedict played Alan Turing, widely acknowledged as the inventor of the modern computer, in the movie Enigma.

2. The Turing Test was developed by Alan Turing in 1950, to test of a machine's ability to exhibit intelligent behaviour equivalent to, or indistinguishable from, that of a human.

3. The world’s first hacker 1999: 46 months prison plus 3 years' probation 1988: One year prison. Kevin David Mitnick (born August 6, 1963) is an American computer security consultant, author, and hacker, best known for his high-profile 1995 arrest and later five years in prison for various computer and communications-related crimes.

4. Mycroft was only 26 when dealing with all this. New job, secret service work,
Sherlock looking like a Greek God, the secret of Eurus dropped on him, solitary life, no one to share anything he loves with….
Chapter 16

Chapter Summary

What happened to Sherlock in University and the hot mess it led everyone into....

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

When Sherlock had finally ended up in college a couple of years ago, he was so bored of the teaching because he had already mastered everything they could possibly teach him. He was desperate for ways to keep his brain busy. Or at least quiet.

He needed Mycroft.

He wanted Mycroft.

He *craved* Mycroft.

Everything had jagged edges without him.

The lights were too bright, the world was too loud.

He was exposed like a warrior without his shield. His mind was always jumpy and restless with no one to soothe it.

His heart was worn out from the aching loneliness caused by his absence.

The monsters under his bed were now inside his head.

Mycroft was like the universal force which had been holding him together at a molecular level.

But his brother had abandoned him so he was going to ignore him too.

He was going to punish him.

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However, he couldn’t run away from his own Mind Palace, where he saw him every day.

He spoke to him. He fought with him. He wanted to show off to him but he wanted to make him suffer too. He wanted to show him that he didn’t need him.

He could manage it alone.

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Then he met Seb.

Sebastian was the type who wanted to hang out with people who were seen as ‘cool’, so he could bask in their reflected glory and use it as leverage to get his way with other people.

Sherlock was, of course, the epitome of cool and he didn’t even have to try. His devil- may- care attitude was as genuine as was his brilliance, and on occasion his sass. He was able to deduce people to bits and Seb used this to his advantage.

Sherlock was naive enough and bored enough to not realize nor care.

One day he went along with Seb to meet his friend who gave them something to smoke.

“Here, it’s crack.” he said. “It’s going to make you feel so gooood.”

Sherlock was already smoking cigarettes so with a casual shrug he took it.

Suddenly everything seemed less jangly. He felt confident, energetic, euphoric. His mind was sharper. He felt like he was on top of the world!!

As he went home after the party that night he realized that for the first time in simply years he could think about Mycroft without a feeling of putting his heart through a shredder.

Eventually he needed more and then it was a slippery slope to more hard drugs and finally to injecting it right into his blood stream.

But even for a short while, it made his mind quiet in a way that nothing had managed since Mycroft had left.

Drugs led to other things soon enough and then one day, he couldn’t even remember how, he ended up in someone’s bed.

There was much panting and moaning and too much touching……..and he wanted to push them away but as the drugs peeled away the layers of consciousness and inhibition he realized even in that hazy state that he was imagining himself with Mycroft.

Mycie. His comfort, his blanket, his love…

And that suddenly made it all so much better. He wanted it now.

Mycroft was holding him. Kissing him. Those were his hands. Soft loving hands. All over his back and face and Sherlock kissed back urgently, growing more frantic when suddenly he exploded in a white hot climax.

*Mycie!* He said before he fell asleep.

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That was the year he started sleeping in Mycroft’ bedroom at night.

Chapter End Notes
Effects of crack cocaine include euphoria, supreme confidence, loss of appetite, insomnia, alertness, increased energy, a craving for more cocaine. When the dopamine levels in the brain plummet later, it leaves the user feeling depressed and low.
Despite all the drugs he had been using, Sherlock had convinced himself that he was not an addict, just a user.

And then one lonely night in London showed it up for the pathetic lie that it was.

Mycroft had not been able to return from work on the day before Christmas Eve. There was simply too much that needed to be sorted out before the offices closed for the next two days. So he had telephoned on the landline to let Sherlock know.

Sherlock had been waiting for him all day already.

He had been restless for the past two days. Ever since he came he had been on edge, wondering how he could tell Mycroft how he felt. Whether he could tell him at all how he felt! A part of him was worried that Mycroft would deduce it just by looking at him and he wanted him to. That would save him the trouble of telling him!

**But what if he hated him for it ?! No…it was better to hide it. Wait for the right time to tell him.**

Being so close to Mycroft made his craving worse but he had managed to keep his distance despite the buzzing sensation he felt at being so close to him for so long. He was itching to touch him.

He thought he could deduce that this would not be unwelcome. The way he looked at him. The way he would call out his name in his dreams.

He was quite sure in fact that his desires were reciprocated.

*Oh for sure Mycie would be tedious and talk about rules and family and stuff like that.*

But he was confident he would make him see sense.

He could see that there wasn’t anyone in Mycroft’s life either.

He had been worried about the cop that first day. Lestrade. He was handsome and friendly and
charming. Besides which he was competent too. He had surprised himself by liking him. A lot. Not a genius but much better than most others.

But it was obvious that he and Mycroft were just friends, if that.

He was more and more certain that he needed to do this now. After all, people are always more vulnerable to emotions on holidays….. it’s the general sense of good cheer and other people’s happiness that brings out the worst insecurities and unrequited desires among people.

Good thing he hadn’t been completely wasted during the psychology lectures at University.

But now Mycroft wasn’t going to come home today. What a pain!

He had never been able to manage being patient. So after he kept the phone down he paced restlessly for a bit and then stepped out.

He walked around aimlessly for a while, drawn to central London, feeling on edge and restless.

Like a moth to a flame, a dealer had noticed him when he crossed into one of the lanes behind Leicester Square.

And Sherlock did not even considered resisting when the man offered him some tablets.

It had been ten entire days without any drug.

He was surprised to realize that while he was with Mycie he hadn’t even thought of needing anything else but today………today he was bored.

There was no Mycie. But there was this new chemical. The dealer called it Ecstasy. Or Lover’s speed.

Good. Now he had something to occupy himself with while Mycroft was away.

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He was up all night, feeling surprisingly full of energy and euphoric and decided that he needed to keep his blood levels of ecstasy high enough to make everything stay brighter and more exciting.

So he took one more tablet for the day ………and then one more.

He felt invincible!!!!

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When Mycroft finally came home later that next evening he saw that Sherlock seemed to be resting inside and didn’t rouse him. He had been wanting to cook a special dinner as a surprise and took advantage of the time to quickly prepare and put the pan of coq-au-vin to simmer on the stove. He sliced some apples and marinated them in butter, brown sugar and cinnamon. He would sauté them later.

Satisfied with his efforts, he went to freshen up and then finally roused Sherlock.
“Get ready Sherlock!” he called out. “It’s lovely outside and we are meeting Greg at the neighbourhood local.”

Mycroft avoided noisy pubs and ‘mingling’ as a rule but Gregory had said he would come around.

He noticed with some surprise that the flat seemed more or less as he had left it and figured that Sherlock might have been bored enough for the last two days and could do with some company.

As they got ready and Sherlock finally came out of the bathroom (What took you so long?!) and started to pull on his old coat, Mycroft stopped him.

“I know it is only Christmas Eve but I want to give you your present now. It will be useful.”

And he had handed him an enormous wrapped present.

Sherlock had unwrapped it with glee to find a luxurious long black coat that fit him perfectly and made him look like one of the Victorian daguerreotypes of the quintessential nobleman.

He looked in the mirror, vain as all young men could afford to be, swirled around, mussed his curls…..and then on an impulse he flipped the collar up.

The sight just took Mycroft’s breath away.

In the struggle to control his features from giving away his feelings, he missed seeing the dilated pupils and the slightly high strung, manic look on Sherlock’s face.

So they had stepped out, and walked to the Slug and Lettuce round the corner.

Greg was waiting and already had a pint on the table. Mycroft got them a round of drinks and they sat there chatting, (or attempting to chat over the noise and chaos). Sherlock was getting more and more restless and irritable but somehow Mycroft didn’t notice it in all the darkness and chaos.

There was a pub quiz going on and at Greg’s prodding Mycroft took part, almost rolling his eyes. He answered question after question but got completely stumped when the sports section started and bowed out gracefully.

Then a man came near their table. He may have been closer to 30, well dressed and good looking. He looked at Mycroft and asked ‘That was a great performance! Can I buy you a drink?’

Mycroft looked at him blandly and said ‘Thanks but no.’ and continued talking to Greg.

The man hesitated and put out his hand to touch Mycroft on his shoulder and said ‘Come on mate, it’s just a drink. Not like I am asking you for a date.’

Before Mycroft could open his mouth to politely refuse again, a fist had come flying and the man was on the floor, bleeding from his mouth.
Sherlock was standing over him like the grim reaper and was about to grab him by the collar and punch him again when Greg was there in a flash, holding him back and pulling him off.

Mycroft found himself shaking and discombobulated because he had been utterly unprepared.

“What the BLOODY HELL Sherlock??!” Greg was asking in a seething angry voice.

And Sherlock had given a high pitched laugh.

Suddenly both men looked into his eyes and saw the blown pupils.

“Fuck!!!” Greg had said under his breath and shoved Sherlock towards Mycroft and told him urgently to get him out before it gets messy. “I will handle this.”

Mycroft had grabbed Sherlock by the arms and started to pull him out when he found him struggling in the opposite direction. “Stop it Sherlock!!”

“My coat! I need my coat!”

Mycroft had grabbed the coat and left, running to get out of the place before either of them could be identified.

“Call the cops!!” he heard someone say and Greg answered calmly “It’s ok, I am a cop.”

Mycroft was stunned at how quickly things had gone crazy and when they got home breathless and panting, Sherlock had burst out into a high pitched laugh again.

Mycroft had stared at him angry and feeling utterly betrayed.

“What the hell Sherlock? Why did you do that? And what have you been taking? Have you been doing drugs in my house?!” He almost yelled at him in outrage and loathing.

“He was touching you Mycie. No one touches you. You are mine.” And Sherlock had clumsily tried to kiss him.

Mycroft was stunned. How had he missed this?

And just when he thought the evening could not get any worse, he saw Greg standing at the door. He had seen and heard everything.

He had seen and heard everything.

Greg took one look at Mycroft and how shattered he was and stepped in and took charge.

He steered Sherlock towards the bathroom. “You need to get to bed lad. Go wash up and then sleep this off. We will talk tomorrow.”

Greg waited in silence till he was done and then literally tucked him in and came and sat down to talk to Mycroft.
“It doesn’t look like his first time. I found these in his room.” He showed him the drugs. “I am flushing them down the toilet and let us pretend we never had this conversation.”

Mycroft was still speechless. *How had he missed this?*

Greg sat there for another couple of minutes and then finally said, “I think you should talk to him tomorrow. About the drugs of course.” He paused. “About the other thing”, he said, rubbing his neck, clearly a bit uncomfortable. “He may well have forgotten it when he wakes up.”

Mycroft looked at him, grateful for the lie, and nodded. “Thank you Gregory. For everything.”

“No problem mate. If he had landed one more punch it would have been impossible to keep it off the books you know……Anyway, I have pulled the Christmas shift so I will be at the Yard if you need me tomorrow for anything. Good night.”
Chapter 18

Chapter Summary

And then it just gets worse...

As soon as Greg left, Mycroft felt all the energy drain out of him after that adrenaline rush.

He felt more exhausted than he had after the recent field exercise in Bosnia.

What had happened to Sherlock?! He had become a drug addict?? When? How? What could he do to help him?

How in heavens name had he missed the signs?!!

How could he trust himself to look after Sherlock??....Or Eurus....

Just then Sherlock himself came out of the bedroom and went straight to the kitchen.

He put his hands into the dish with the apple slices and just ate them with his fingers and after a few bites, he looked around and focussed on all the food and started laughing.

“You cooked for me? My Mycie cooked for me. I love you Mycie!!!” he said, still euphoric from the drug.

“Stop it Sherlock!” Mycroft said to him, utterly unsure suddenly of what to do.

Of course he knew how to restrain and even take down a suspect, violent or armed or not.

But this was not an enemy agent! This was Sherlock!

“Please Sherlock,” he said in a softer voice. “Go to sleep. We will talk tomorrow.”

“Tomorrow, always tomorrow, always so proper, SUCH a good boy Mycie.........Tsk tsk Mycie. No! We will talk today. You don’t believe me do you?” And before Mycroft could blink, Sherlock had picked up a knife in his hands. “I will show you how much I love you.” And he started to carve on his own arm. “M for Mycie.”

Suddenly everything froze in front of Mycroft’s eyes.

He could see Eurus standing there, five years old, knife in hand, blood dripping down her arm and asking in her expressionless voice, staring at him with her cold eyes “Which one is pain?”

He could hear a ringing in his ears and a sort of fog seemed to fill the flat. He was trapped and unable to move.....

“Y” said Sherlock, still carving letters on his left arm as Mycroft blinked, un-believing.
And as suddenly as it had come, the fog lifted and he sprang into action.

“Sherlock STOP IT!!” Mycroft shouted and twisted his hand in a grip, made him drop the knife and then slapped him. Hard.

Then he dropped his hand and stared in horror at what he had done.

Sherlock had instinctively put his own left hand to his cheek to soothe it, blood dripping down to his elbow.

Time stopped.

It seemed as though the entire flat was echoing and reverberating from that slap.

“I am sorry Lock, so sorry.” Mycroft started to say softly reaching out to Sherlock, utterly mortified by what he had done. “Please Sherlock…….”

Sherlock turned on his heels and walked into the bathroom and locked the door.

Mycroft put his head in his hands and cried. Bitterly.

*How in the world had it come to this? Where had he gone wrong?*

*What was he going to tell Mummy?!*

He went and sat in the hallway so he could prevent Sherlock from doing anything foolish. But somewhere during the night he must have fallen asleep because when he opened his eyes at 3 am and tiptoed in to see if Sherlock was ok, the flat was empty. There was nothing left of Sherlock’s things.

It was as though he hadn’t even been there.
Chapter 19

Chapter Summary

The coming of the Ice Age

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Mycroft just lost all strength in his legs and slid down and sat against the wall, in despair, head in his hands.

What a cruel twist of fate this was.

Sherlock felt the same desire as he did apparently………but how could he allow this to happen?

How had he missed these signs?? Sherlock was doing drugs??!

He had been blinded by his emotions.…..that was the only explanation…..emotions were clearly a chemical defect on the losing side.

Never again would emotions rule him. He would rule over his emotions. Cold logical control was the only way to safety and sanity.

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A small voice inside him also wanted to know……could he really believe what Sherlock had said under the influence of drugs?

How desperately he wanted to believe……but even if it were true and they did enter a relationship which was not that of brothers, it would have to be hidden so carefully even at the best of times ……

And then a cold finger of dread went down his spine……but what if someone found out and Sherlock was not fully in his senses??

The danger to both of them was immeasurable.

He simply could not allow this to happen. He needed to push him away.

He would never let him know that the feelings were reciprocated.

He felt a sharp pain in his chest at that thought, as a shard of ice pierced his heart and took root there, spreading through his veins as the transformation to the Iceman began……

He realized what this would mean but he took a deep breath and sacrificed his love without another thought. Sherlock was young and not in control. He needed him to get clean.

And then perhaps even find someone he could be with openly. After all, he would never condemn
his beloved brother to a lifetime of solitude and loneliness that he was willingly going to embrace. Sherlock deserved to be happy.

Mycroft got up, washed his face, looked at himself in the mirror and said farewell to Mycroft Holmes, the Man who had Dared to Love.

Hello Ice Man. Caring is not an advantage. All hearts are broken….

Then he telephoned Greg at the Yard and told him what had happened.

Not everything, but enough to persuade him to find out if Sherlock had gone back home or was lying somewhere on the streets of London.

He kept himself occupied with some housekeeping, catching up on documents and paperwork, while half his brain was listening out for the telephone to ring.

It finally did, after four hours.

Greg had spoken to the Constable at the local police station near the Holmes residence and after some leg work had been told that yes, the younger Mr. Holmes had indeed returned home that morning.

Mycroft did not go back home for the next two years. At all.

He worked harder and smarter and rose through the ranks almost precipitously. His intellect was so much beyond what anyone else possessed that they barely even understood what it was that they were in awe of. Patterns, deductions, strategies, political manoeuvres, he was the master of all he surveyed. Decision were made with ice cold logic. The end game was all that mattered. By any means necessary.

He had no time for tears and trauma.

Queen and Country would be protected and none shall cross his path.

Even Mummy had finally given up on trying to persuade Mycroft to come home. He would not allow her to visit him either. However he did speak to her when she called and was always polite and as considerate as it was possible to be, when the very fact that she was calling from the home in which Sherlock was physically present made all the demons rise up and knock on the doors of the dungeon in his Mind Palace.

He always asked after Sherlock of course, because to not do so would be very suspicious. Mummy
knew that something had happened between the two of them but somehow hadn’t dug deeper to find out.

*After all she was also getting older…..* Mycroft thought. He already felt a hundred and three on some days and had to remind himself when he needed to write down his age on legal forms.

He was only 28.

…

He was involved in far fewer fieldwork engagements now and his personal throne was being readied for him in the heart of London. The uncrowned King of London Below, where all the machinations, power struggles, battle orders, dirty deals, assassins for hire, ruthless negotiations which took no hostages....everything that went on in the dark underbelly of one of the most powerful regimes in the world, while the ordinary people and the goldfish swam about in blissful ignorance on the streets above.

The Most Dangerous Man in Britain was an unknown face to almost everyone, but those few who did know him spoke his name in terrified whispers and very few would dare look him in the eye.

The shard of ice had taken root in his heart and spread through his veins and those icy blue eyes did not soften for anyone any more.

…

And then one day Mummy dropped a bombshell on him.

Chapter End Notes

The reference to London Below is from Neverwhere by Neil Gaiman, (Although his London Below is a different beast altogether.)

That and the ages of Mycroft (103 and 28) are both references taken from the delicious long comment exchanges I had with eloquated in earlier chapters! Thanks for giving my muse these little nuggets of delight ;)
**Chapter 20**

Chapter Summary

Mycroft cannot say no when Mummy asks him to look out for Sherlock. But as always, there is no one to look out for Mycroft....

“Hello? Myc dear, now listen to me. I don’t know what happened between you and Sherlock when he came to stay with you, but now he has dropped out of his post-graduation and is insisting on moving to London. I can’t order a 21 year old to not go, so I am asking you to please look after him when he gets there. Even if he doesn’t want you to. I have no idea what he wants to do but Myc, as his older brother I am making you responsible for his safety. You *know* how impulsive and rash and emotional he can get.” and she heaved a long suffering sigh.

Mycroft was unable to even react for a few seconds.

“How can I do that Mummy? If he won’t even listen to you, what are the chances....”

“Myc? Are you still there?”

“Yes, Mummy.”

“Do you promise me you will look after him?”

“Yes Mummy.” Mycroft said obediently, the yoke of the first born heavy around his neck.

So the vigil began.

Sherlock had taken a room (*a hovel!* Mycroft thought in disgust) in Montague Street.

What was he going to do?? He didn’t have any job that Mycroft could discern.

Of course the answer was obvious.

He was going to do drugs.

And so he did. On a regular basis. Running through his allowance money like water.

Mycroft had been trying to keep an eye on him and as he had risen in seniority he was able to find
better ways of surveillance. Initially he had been hesitant, questioning his own motives for keeping such a close eye on his brother.

But on the day he was told that Sherlock had almost overdosed and he was able to arrange for a rescue and admission within half an hour was the day when he left behind any residual guilt at his interference.

He needed to keep Sherlock alive. That was all that mattered.

His loss would break his heart.

Sherlock of course railed against this ‘interference’ and ‘power hungry’ behaviour of his older brother and was vicious and spiteful to him every single time that they came face to face.

What a terrible dilemma this was. Worthy of its own Greek tragedy.

He was forced to be his arch enemy instead of his one true love.

Such was the roll of the dice.

The only consolation in all this was that either wilfully or as a defence, Sherlock seemed to have completely wiped THAT Christmas from his Mind Palace.

It was obvious that he remembered the resentment, the bitterness but he had never behaved as though he remembered what had really happened that day.

Greg knew some of it of course, but not all and so Mycroft was left to be the keeper of that poisoned memory.

Mycroft had called Gregory for help the very first time he needed it. They had not spoken even once since that fateful Christmas years ago but Mycroft had no ego and no pride when it came to saving Sherlock. And Greg had dropped everything and gone full speed with sirens blaring to the doss house where Sherlock had been seen and it was only his urgent action which had saved Sherlock’s life.

Mycroft went to the hospital to see Sherlock, unsure of whether he should do so or not. But the news that he had been rescued from a near death made it difficult to stay away.

Sherlock was still under the influence and when he saw Mycroft he struggled to sit up and tried to kiss him again.

Mycroft froze, then he pushed him back down to the bed and got up to leave.

Greg was standing at the door, a sombre witness once again.

Mycroft merely bowed his head, painfully aware that just a touch of those lips and all the suppressed desires had roared back to flame like a dormant volcano.
He was terrified that Greg would recognize this in his eyes and all he wanted to do was flee, so he did.

As the months turned into years, he saw Greg become closer to Sherlock, take care of him, even take him home and look after him.

*How close were they getting* he wondered, always with a pit in his stomach.

Soon after the near fatal episode Mycroft had visited Sherlock once, in Gregory’s presence and told him very stiffly that all he would request is that there be a list. So as to help the doctors. Sherlock had turned his face away and after a minute’s uncomfortable silence, Mycroft stood up, nodded to Greg and left.

*How had it all gone so wrong?? Was there anything he could have done differently? better? Was there anything he could do now to change things?*

None of these questions offered any answers and merely chased their tails, round and round inside his head as he stared into a future that was a choice of two terrible roads, fork ing into the distance--being alone without Sherlock because he chose to stay away. Or being alone without Sherlock because one day they would be too late in finding him.

His heart was so heavy that day that even Atlas would have struggled to hold it up.
Chapter 21

Chapter Summary

Mycroft never catches a break....

Mycroft worked even harder, like a man possessed. If all he could do for Sherlock was to keep him safe then God help him- that he would do to the best of his abilities. He would have eyes and ears on him at all times and he would be ready to rescue him any time of the day or night, any day of the year.

Another year went by and once again there was a close call. This time he went to the site itself because he simply could not stay away, but he waited in the shadows and saw Greg lift Sherlock up in his arms.

Then Sherlock put his arms around Greg’s shoulder and turned his face into his chest. Mycroft couldn’t see clearly but Greg may have kissed Sherlock on the forehead in a gesture more tender than he could have imagined.

Mycroft would never forget that sight.

Sherlock was being cared for, even loved, and he was returning that affection to this man who was his safety net during these vulnerable years.

There was no place for Mycroft to be there anymore.

He would always keep an eye on him of course but after that Mycroft stayed away. Far away.

He did pay for rehab and he continued the surveillance of course but he felt that it was better for Sherlock to move on now and find his own circle of people who were friends and perhaps even more....... 

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Sherlock was in rehab for three months and when he came back he went straight to meet Greg. He didn’t know what transpired between them but to Mycroft’s surprise Greg seemed to have worked some kind of miracle. Sherlock stayed clean and had also started helping out with cases for Scotland Yard.

One day he even moved out of that disgusting hovel and found a place in Baker Street.

Soon after that Mycroft received a text message from Gregory asking to meet him. Mycroft arranged for them to meet at the Diogenes Club where privacy could be fully assured.

Greg came in and sat, not uncomfortable but clearly anxious to say what he needed to.

Mycroft looked at his face and felt his own blood drain away as he interpreted the look. He was going to inform him about his relationship with Sherlock. Did he really have to listen to it? Wasn’t
it bad enough that he had seen it and could recognize what was going on? Was he going to have to give the ‘Break his heart and I will break your legs” talk while his own heart was shattering into a million pieces?

Greg cleared his throat. “Mycroft, I am sure I don’t need to tell you how fond I am of Sherlock. You probably already know what is going on with my marriage so it would not be an exaggeration in fact to say that Sherlock is the one I care for the most. I know he cares for me too…….in his own way. I can assure you that I will always be there for him. No matter what happens”. He paused and waited for Mycroft to say something. When nothing was forthcoming, he continued. “But …I want to make it very clear to you that ….whatever I feel for him is entirely as a friend, a guardian or a mentor. There is absolutely nothing romantic about our relationship. I just wanted to let you know. I think it is important for you to be a part of his life again. He needs to know how much you care and you need to try and mend fences.”

What could Mycroft possibly say to this intervention? Once he could think beyond the roaring of the blood in his ears and he almost fainted with relief at what he had heard he nodded and managed to say only “Thank you Gregory.”

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So Mycroft did plan to drop in on Sherlock once in a while in his new flat when suddenly the goalposts shift again.

There was a spate of suicides, a taxi driver who rode off with Sherlock and an utterly unknown ex-Army Doctor who shot the cabbie dead and saved Sherlock’s life!

Mycroft turned up at the scene almost minutes later because he had left as soon as his surveillance team realized what Sherlock was doing and who he was with. He was so relieved to find that despite his deathwish his brother had not succeeded and was walking around in one piece.

Later as he saw the way the new flatmate Dr John Watson and his brother Sherlock had walked off together, laughing, bumping into each other as they walked away, Mycroft suddenly felt very lonely indeed.

He stood there, leaning on his umbrella and watched them. He turned to go and saw Gregory standing there watching him. They exchanged a wistful look and then went their separate ways.
Chapter 22

Chapter Summary

Navigating through the landmines in Sherlock’s Mind Palace.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Some memories are trying to break out from the force field they were placed inside. They are trying to batter the door down but it has been closed too hard and for far too long.

“Oh for heaven’s sake!” Sherlock exclaimed in exasperation as he looked at the front door. The knocker had been straightened. *Mycroft was here.*

He felt a stab of pain somewhere deep inside. It was not quite ‘pain’ pain but it *hurt* and it wasn’t really anything else he could name. As he charged up the stairs he could smell that spicy cologne his brother favoured.

It made him irritable, itchy, frustrated.

And by the time he actually faced him, sitting there, elegant and put together, lips pursed in what was meant to be a smile, Sherlock was ready to yell and throw things.

But as much as he *hated* seeing Mycroft in his flat, he hated *even more* the pit that opened up in his chest when he saw him leave. Every single time.

Why?? WHY??!

Despite these frustrating real life encounters, Sherlock knew that whenever he was troubled or in danger, his brother would *always* be there.

In person as well as in his Mind Palace.

Cool and collected as ever. Brilliant beyond genius.

So he simply didn’t understand why he always felt the *burning desire* to hurt him. He would dream of him sometimes, with himself larger than life, shouting at a smaller Mycroft cowering beneath him, begging forgiveness.

This dream always left him disturbed and he acted out on those days, doing things like turning up at the Buckingham Palace in only his sheet.
He would never ever let Mycroft know but when he saw him all put together, not a hair out of place, not a thought out of line, coolly appraising him and all the other ‘goldfish’, he felt like just going up to him and mussing his hair up, ripping his perfectly tailored coat off him and throwing it on the floor in a heap and pulling his tie off and ………he knew there was something more he wanted to do but his mind wouldn’t allow him to process it.

He wanted to paint over that perfection with his own chaos and drama. He wanted to trample all over the pristine snowfield and leave great stomping footprints on it. He wanted to take that impossibly balanced house of cards and scatter it all in every direction.

He was like the waves crashing against a rock.

They recede, they return, they crash and when they are done with their drama, they are murmuring and lapping at the edges of the rock and the rock just smiles. Eventually all that pounding will cost them both as the rock is slowly turned to sand.

But still the waves crash because that is what they do.

And still the rock stands there because that is what it will always do.

Chapter End Notes

This and the next few chapters from inside Sherlock’s Mind Palace are adapted from a fic I wrote earlier called Brother Mine. I guess it’s ok to steal stuff from your own former self :)
Chapter 23

Chapter Summary

I am on the side of angels. Whose side are you on Mycroft?

Falling in love, falling out of it, hatred, indifference, boredom, sorrow, regret.
He saw the world as a steaming hot mess and himself, alone, looking at it from a distance.
Objective and emotionless.

But when he looked at that image closely he was never really alone and there was always someone behind him. Shadowy but right there. Someone who had his back.

He couldn’t see that face clearly but something hinted that it might be his older brother.

Ugh he grunted in frustration. Why couldn’t he stay confined to his floor in the Mind Palace?! Why did he have to be everywhere?!

Watching. Seeing. Knowing.

He could even smell him there. A mixture of fine wool, aftershave, polished wood, printed paper, ink, leather.

Burnt atoms in the wake of a lightning strike.

Powerful.

Protective.

Perfect.

His brain supplied these adjectives helpfully as he swatted them all away and contemplated shooting some more bullets into the wall.

SHUT UP. JUST SHUT UP.

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Sometimes the noise got too much and the fire in his veins needed to be cooled and 7% would do just fine thank you.
As the white solution hit the hot blood with a sizzle, there would be a few moments of peace. Then he could drift along on the icebergs and feel everything fade out so he could focus on only what he wanted to solve.

Solution= solve. He giggled.

_I am so witty. Did you hear that? Brother? Where are you? You always hear me don't you?_

And of course Mycroft always heard him. These cries for attention. Pleas for help. He would always appear like a genie from the bottle and rescue him. He would stand by, leaning minimally on his umbrella, the weight of Queen and Country on one shoulder, balanced by the much heftier weight of worries for his brother on the other.

He hated it.

He hated that Mycroft could stand there, every hair in place, every crease perfect, shoes polished and waistcoat buttoned, because _god forbid that civilizations should crumble if his older brother wasn’t holding it all up with his gentlemanly attire._

_Why did he look at him that way though? A mixture of helpless sorrow? Something tragic foretold? Something he couldn’t bear to see nor bear to look away from?_

Like a train wreck in action.

_Yes, that is what the expression on his brother’s face reminded him of_ thought Sherlock as he drifted away one more time.

He had written a list of course. Mycroft had insisted hadn’t he? That there will always be a list

His last coherent thought was that Mycroft didn’t realize………… what he was most addicted to was not on the list although the entire list was in fact addressed to him.

All the other names on the list were merely poor substitutes for what he craved but couldn’t have. _Didn’t even know it was his to have._

But he never remembered these thoughts when he recovered.

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_Rehabilitation._ Defined as ‘the action of restoring something that has been damaged, to its former condition.’

Mycroft sent him for rehab. To restore him to his former condition? But why was he damaged? Should he ask him that? Was he in fact damaged?

Perhaps this broken state was his default and poor Mycroft was trying to impose perfection on chaos. Like trying to smooth over an earthquake with some yoga mats.

_What if this was as good as he could get?_ Always on the side of angels but never one of them.
He often wondered which side his brother was on……… but he knew the answer even before he wondered.

Mine……………... Always mine.
Chapter 24

Chapter Summary

Sherlock and his Mind Palace are still locked in a battle. Secrets, lies, clueing for looks.....

He had tried to show off his deducing skills to Irene (but more to antagonize Mycroft) and had ended up shamefaced when he realized that his older brother had been, as always, ten steps ahead of the game and he had done more harm than good for Queen and Country. He had made up for it by unlocking the damn phone but the damage had been done.

*Another black mark against him in whatever logbook Mycroft probably maintained for him.*

He wondered how come his brother didn’t despise him for all his failings. For the drugs and the delinquency and the devastation.

But despite everything, he knew, as surely as he drew breath that Mycroft had his back. Every time.

Every.

Single.

Time.

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Then had come the most difficult decision of them all.

There was never a real choice actually, since he would do anything to save John, Lestrade and Mrs. Hudson. But he knew that he would not be able to do it without Molly and Mycroft. It was up to them to make sure that the landing didn’t kill him and that he could continue to survive his mission.

As he had expected, Molly rose to the occasion remarkably and put herself and her job on the line for him. But Mycroft went above and beyond and actually entered the prison where he was being held and managed to rescue him under the noses of his captors. Three hours to learn Serbian while Anthea got his outfit together and voila, he pulled Sherlock out of the rabbit’s hat.

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Afterwards Mycroft had come over to Baker Street to spend time with him. That day they had played Operation and Mycroft had lost. Sherlock had been so gleeful at that.

“Oopsie!” he had said. “Can’t handle a broken heart – how *very* telling.”

Somehow he had been reluctant to let Mycroft go that day. He kept reeling him in, first with a
board game and then with a game of deductions.

Mrs Hudson had come in with tea and with that uncanny perception of hers had said what neither of them had been able to.

“He’s secretly pleased to see you underneath all that ...”

“Sorry – which of us?” Mycroft had asked with a sour expression.

“Both of you.” She had replied as she left the room.

Sherlock looked at Mycroft and said almost without thinking “Mycroft, I’ve been away for two years. I thought perhaps you might have found yourself a ... goldfish.”

Why had Mycroft looked so appalled at that suggestion? Was it something he ought to have known?

Eventually Mycroft had said flatly “I’m not lonely, Sherlock.”

Why did something deep inside his Mind Palace scream at him and tell him that it was not the truth?

The words “I am not lonely Sherlock” echoed in his mind. The hesitation with which Mycroft had said it that day. The fleetingly lost look in his eyes just before he said it.

Why did it make him feel so utterly bereft??
Chapter 25

Chapter Summary

Sherlock still can't figure out what his brother means to him.......but he does find out what he means to his brother.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Sherlock knew that whenever he saw Mycroft in his ‘Ice Man’ avatar he hated it.

His mind kept hinting at things being different. Something so much warmer. Something which had offered him comfort on scary nights and indulgence on slow summer days.

Something fond and attentive. Even devoted.

But what? How? When? What clue was he missing?

He would never ever ask Mycroft and his own brain was proving to be a challenge. If he didn’t know better it felt like someone had overwritten a base program.

Now he was sounding like one of the conspiracy theorists on John’s blog.

John. Who had mourned him and then beaten him up when he came back from the Fall.

It’s a good thing they had moved on to a random kebab shop when John head- butted him. No CCTVs.

Somehow Sherlock knew that if Mycroft had seen that, there would be no John in his life.

There may not even be any life in John.

Later John had ‘forgiven’ him and called him his best friend and asked him to be the Best Man at his wedding. Sherlock had stepped up to the challenge and had genuinely meant every word he said. John was the best and bravest man he knew. But somehow he could not call him his best friend.

There was someone else in the hidden corners of his Mind Palace who was his best friend and so much more.

Larger than life. Better than the best. Braver than the bravest.

Someone who loved him more fiercely and possessively that any other power on earth could.

He knew it. But he could not figure out who...

His brain was overwhelmed and for some reason he had felt the need to telephone Mycroft and ask him if he was coming to the wedding. As a matter of urgency.

He had made it sound like a joke but somehow he was really anxious and just wanted Mycroft to be

Mycroft had firmly refused. “No, Sherlock, I will not be coming to the “night do,” as you so poetically put it……. Enjoy not getting involved.”

But when things had unravelled during his Best Man speech and he needed to solve the mystery, it was Mycroft who had showed up in his Mind palace and made him realize that he was looking for a murderer.

He had left the wedding early, restless. He knew people thought he was in love with John. That was simply ridiculous. He felt equally strongly for Greg, Molly and Mrs. Hudson. After all he had died for them hadn’t he?

Mycroft appeared in his Mind Palace, impeccably dressed as always, standing next to his car, leaning gently on his umbrella. He had an odd expression on his face, as though asking And what about me Brother Mine? What do you feel for me?

Sherlock didn’t know the answer to that but when they were at their parents’ home for Christmas that year, he got the answer to what Mycroft felt for him.

“Your loss would break my heart.” He had said.

Sherlock had choked on the cigarette he was smoking. Mycroft had his back turned to him so he couldn’t see his expression but he was shocked into asking “What the HELL am I supposed to say to that??!”

“Merry Christmas?” Mycroft had asked, hands spread out helplessly almost, that same wistful look in his eyes.

Sherlock had, as usual, disregarded Mycroft’s advice, assuming it was to protect the government interest and not realizing that it was, as always, to keep him safe. So he had gone ahead with his insane plan and ended up shooting Charles Augustus Magnussen in the head, in front of multiple eyewitnesses.

Mycroft had sounded frantic with panic at the sight of his baby brother with laser gun tags on him.

“Oh Sherlock!!! What have you done?!!”

Sherlock heard the distress in his voice and felt once again like the naughty little boy who always got into trouble……but Mycie always saved him even then. Always.

Surely he would save him this time too? Won’t you Brother Mine? He thought.

He didn’t know that every single fear of him becoming like Eurus has surfaced in Mycroft’s Mind
Galaxy.

Another cold blooded killer in the family?! How could he possibly keep them safe from repercussions anymore?

Chapter End Notes

This lovely video clip of the "Your loss would break my heart" scene
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3d6PJKUVcIg
Chapter 26

Chapter Summary

Emotional context dear brother, Eurus had taunted him.

Chapter Notes

This video is perfect viewing to go with this chapter!

Tainted love https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sk9UFuOfJJA

Eventually the entire tragic and deadly saga of Eurus had unravelled all around them and they had been swept along, ripped apart and dashed around at the edge of that tsunami.

Emotional context dear brother she had taunted him.

He and John had planned to frighten Mycroft to get him to confess about the existence of his sister but as he remembered seeing his older brother smile so fondly when the childhood videos played, he had felt again that sharp pain inside him. Memories seemed to emerge of himself as a child and a safe place where he felt loved. So loved.

Stop it, he told his brain. Don’t come in the way of my deductions. I need to solve this.

Eurus had led them through the seven circles of hell and when they reached the Final Problem, he had found himself with a gun in his hand and John and Mycroft in front of him.

Choose one of them Eurus had commanded.

And then Mycroft had done the un-thinkable.

He had not only stepped up to be sacrificed, but even under those circumstances tried to protect his little brother from hurting, by insulting John and wanting to make Sherlock angry enough to want to kill his brother.

“Not in the face, though, please. I’ve promised my brain to the Royal Society.” Mycroft had said. “I suppose there is a heart somewhere inside me. I don’t imagine it’s much of a target but ...... why don’t we try for that? Goodbye….Brother Mine.”

As soon as Mycroft said that, and the tenderness with which he had looked at him, something hidden deep in the catacombs of his Mind Palace had been unlocked finally and he was flooded with a sea of light.
In that instant, like poets see the universe in a drop of water, Sherlock saw the meaning of his entire life. Here in this seventh circle of hell, he was offered a glimpse of what heaven could look like.

Immersed in love.


He realized all at once that the pain had been desire. The ache had been longing. The desire for attention had been the unrequited love. The drugs had been a poor substitute for a deeper craving. The fog had been caused by the force field around his memories blocking his love for Mycroft and as a result, also Mycroft’s love for him.

THAT Christmas unspooled in front of his mind’s eye and his brother’s words tumbled down around him, whispering, echoing and reminding him over all these years.

“I will always be there for you.”

“Promise me there will always be a list.”

“Your loss would break my heart”.

“Seeing more of you”.

“Like the old times.”

“I am not lonely.”

“Brother mine.”

They echoed around his head. Finally the veil had been pierced.

He looked at Mycroft and knew exactly where to aim if he wanted to shoot at his heart.

He turned the gun and pointed it at himself.
Chapter 27

Chapter Summary

"What the caterpillar calls the end of the world……the world calls a butterfly."

Chapter Notes

This quote has been attributed to everyone from Lao Tzu to Richard Bach...so let us just agree that a wise person said it :)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Fortunately no one else died that evening though a tragic death from the long shadows of the past had been revealed.

Sherlock wasn’t sure he could cope with the seismic shifts inside his Mind Palace any more. Everything was being ripped apart, shredded and tossed around inside a cyclone of emotions.

There was pain. So much pain. Heart break. Agony. A terrifying sense of loss of control.

He could see their entire family life from Mycroft’s eyes now.

The knowledge of Eurus, his obsessive surveillance of Sherlock, the trigger of his drugs and behaviour during THAT Christmas which would have led Mycroft to keep his distance. The vulnerability his older brother masked so incredibly well. The ridiculous lie that he was not lonely.

Sherlock wanted to scream at the skies today. WHY?? WHY US???

Inside this chaos of cosmic proportions, to his intense shock, he even felt sympathy for Eurus.

He could understand now what she must have felt. He took his own feelings of unrequited love that he hadn’t even been aware of for Mycroft and the agony it had caused him in suppressing it, and multiplied it a thousand times, given how much more brilliant yet how much less emotionally developed Eurus had been.

All she had wanted was a best friend to play with, but with the innocent yet cruel lack of diplomacy that children have, Sherlock hadn’t been able to give that to her. It made him feel….guilty ? Responsible? Helpless?

Could he have done something, said something, to have made this better?

Another penny dropped. Good heavens. Is this what it felt like inside Mycroft’s head all the time?! That terrible sense of being responsible for other people’s safety and even happiness as things went into freefall?
No wonder he kept chanting “Caring is not an advantage Sherlock.”

But……… this was the same man who had also said “Your loss would break my heart.”

He felt a wave of such intense love for his older brother that it threatened to drown him that very instant. He could not breathe. He was shaking. He did not think he could bear to stay away from him for a minute longer………but what if he did not feel the same for him?? Surely he did….he must have ….but what if……….

Sherlock felt as though he was undergoing some sort of metamorphosis. Like those awful science fiction movies that Greg used to make him watch during those dark days of his drug habit, as he lay recovering on the sofa.

Like a caterpillar inside the pupa, every molecule that made him, or who he thought he as, had been ripped apart, mangled, churned and re-formed.

He was not the same Sherlock who had entered Sherringford.

As though confirming what he felt, he heard a voice, which he realized with another wave of emotions (shame? gratitude? relief?) to be that of Lestrade.

Gregory.

Another man who had always but always had his back. Held his hand. Loved him. Hugged him when he returned from the Fall.

“He is a good man.” that voice was saying to someone else, with pride.

Was he really? Sherlock wondered.

He needed to do something about it so he never let these two men down again.

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That night after making sure that Mycroft had reached home safely and that John, Rosie, Molly and Mrs. Hudson were fine, Sherlock went to the house that had been his refuge more times than he could count.

Where he had recovered from the highs, the lows and the agonies of withdrawals. Where he had been made welcome without any judgement, unfailingly.

Where lived the man who had been his salvation, time and time again, and who he had never recognized, let alone appreciated, till now.

Sherlock had been so puzzled when he had turned up at Baker Street that one time with the full cavalry and a helicopter but in retrospect it made so much sense. Nothing else mattered to him but keeping Sherlock safe.

That is how it had always been. And that is how it would always be.
Before he could ring the bell, the door opened.

“Figured you might come tonight lad. Was looking out for you from the window.”

Sherlock stepped in and closed the door behind him, turned and went straight into those open arms, as gentle brown eyes looked at him with more love than he felt he deserved.

This time when Greg hugged him, he hugged him back and wept like he had never wept his entire adult life.

Chapter End Notes

Please don’t kill me!!!! But what is a pleasant Sunday without a terrifying cliff hanger…hahaha * rubs hands in wicked glee*
“Why didn’t you ever say it Greg??!” Sherlock burst out, all the well-planned opening lines having gone out of his head.

“Say what?” Greg asked cautiously, though he knew what was coming, but really, they did not need any more misunderstandings at this point.

There had been no need for words.

He wept at all the trauma that had been unleashed. He wept for his former self. He wept for his lost sister. He wept for his lonely brother. He wept for all those who died needlessly and he wept for his parents who were going to be forced now to live with this new sorrow.

He wept and wept and was comforted.

He was so agonizingly exhausted that he must have fallen asleep while crying, wrapped in Greg’s arms.

Just like the old times then….

When he finally woke up some hours later, he found himself lying in the bedroom, Greg still fast asleep next to him.

He was too tired to even sit up and as he lay there his brain went into high gear at once, with too much still to deduce and absorb and cope with from yesterday.

_Had it been only yesterday?!_

It felt like the Big Bang which had exploded out of nothingness and rapidly created the entire universe.

_What were the rules of this new universe? Which laws applied?_

Newton’s? Every reaction has an equal and opposite reaction…..

Einstein’s? You can know the location or the speed of anything but never both at the same time….

Or Schrodinger’s? The cat may be dead or alive but you won’t know till you look at it. But the very act of looking at it can fundamentally change what happens to the cat…….

Chaos, entropy, black holes, death……but also light, life, new beginnings….

Greg woke up just then and looked at him. His eyes were still swollen with tiredness and his hair seemed even more grey than ever before. But when he looked at Sherlock, and saw that he was
awake, he smiled.

“You ok Sunshine?”

“Hmmm.” Sherlock said, still unable to speak and articulate even a tiny bit of what was swirling inside him.

Greg got off the bed with a groan. He shuffled off to the bathroom and then to the kitchen. He came back in with a tray full of coffee mugs, eggs and toast. He put a plate in front of Sherlock and wordlessly they both ate and drank and felt a bit more alive.

Sherlock still couldn’t get himself to look Greg in the eye. It was all too intense and he wasn’t sure about what he would see.

But he remembered this silence. This capacity that Greg had always had for comfortable silences. And for bringing him back to life. Again and again.

Sherlock felt himself flush as he remembered how rude and annoying he must have been at all those crime scenes. And yet Greg had stuck by him. Of course he needed his help to solve some cases for him but Greg hadn’t made it to D.I just like that. He was also quite capable of solving cases on his own, in his own time maybe, but capable.

*Why had he suffered me for all these years?*

“Emotional context dear brother” he could hear Eurus’s voice inside his head again.

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Finally, breakfast was cleared away. He could hear Greg doing the dishes, making a few phone calls.

He took a deep breath. *This conversation could not be avoided any longer….*

Just then Greg came in and told him, “I spoke to Mycroft. He seems okay…..but you know how he always needs to be strong for everyone………so, I don’t know.” and he shrugged.

“Why didn’t you ever say it Greg??!” Sherlock burst out, all the well- planned opening lines having gone out of his head.

“Say what?” Greg asked cautiously, though he knew what was coming, but really, they did not need any more misunderstandings at this point.

“About what happened between me and Mycroft THAT Christmas. You were there. I remembered.”

“Yes, I was there Sherlock but it was not for me to tell. You had clearly blocked it or deleted or whatever it is that you do inside that Mind Palace of yours. And what good would it have done anyway? Mycroft was ……well, just starting off in what was obviously a very promising and high profile government career. You were an out of control drug addict. As well as his own younger brother.” Greg looked at Sherlock, kindly. “Incest is still on the books as a crime you know.”

“Do you think….he…he still……” Sherlock trailed off, not sure what he wanted to ask. Not sure if he wanted to know the answer.
“That he still loves you?” Greg asked with a half-smile. “More than I have seen anyone love anyone else. More than I love you too lad and that is saying a lot.” He winked. “You Holmes brothers are going to be the death of me one day. Jet black hair I had before I met the two of you!” he said with a sudden grin, running his fingers through his hair.

Sherlock looked down, swept over with feelings for this wonderful man who had made place for him in his home and his heart and his workplace and asked for nothing in return but that he be a good man.

“I am sorry Greg….I …….forgive me” Sherlock said, stumbling over these unfamiliar words, uncharted emotions.

Greg laughed. “There is nothing to forgive Sherlock. And even if there was, it was all forgotten the day you came back and met me in the car park. There is nothing more I could have asked for from the Universe. Ok? So don’t beat yourself up with any of this guilt. Yes, we all make mistakes, but we all need to learn and pick ourselves up and move on. We all have our roles to play in this life and who knows? Maybe there is a past life connection? Karma and all that. But for me, it has been a privilege to look out for you. Always.”

Sherlock was overwhelmed by this man’s capacity to care and forgive. He was filled with respect for this man who saw horrible crimes and the worst of humanity on a daily basis and still retained his faith in it.

*What had he ever done to deserve this man?!*

But there was one more difficult question he needed to ask.

The old Sherlock would never have come near this emotional landmine with a 100 foot long barge pole. Would never have seen it for what it was. But the new Sherlock did. He moved cautiously but he moved forward.

This needed to be asked.

“Do you…… are you …..” he started off but didn’t know exactly what to say so he just waved his hands between the two of them.

“Do I what?” Greg asked, ten steps ahead of him, for the first time. “Care for you? Love you? Yes, of course I do. Always have. You know that. Am I in love with you? Nah. You are certainly more than a friend but it’s not a romantic interest. All relationships can’t be labelled so neatly you know, like your specimens in Bart’s.”

At this reference to Bart’s Sherlock paled. Molly!! *What was he going to do with that?!*

“Sherlock! What happened?” Greg asked him, concerned at this odd reaction.

*Oh yes, of course, Greg didn’t know everything that had happened at Sherringford.*

So Sherlock told him about Molly, haltingly, not really wanting to re-visit those horrible five minutes but he owed him this much.

There was silence when he finished. Greg looked weary and angry. Sherlock felt uneasy.

*Was he angry with him? What else could he have done? Destroy Molly’s life or Molly’s heart… what a choice to make….*
What Greg said next was most unexpected. “Poor Eurus.” He said, thoughtfully. “To want such bitter revenge, how un-loved she must have felt all her life.”

They sat in silent contemplation.

Then Greg cleared his throat. “Not that I can condone a single thing she did and the lives she took…… but I am glad you found a way to connect with her finally. Family is all that matters in the end Sherlock……” He smiled sadly. “Even if many members of your family may not have been born into it.”

Sherlock looked at him, puzzled.

“You told Mycroft that John was family didn’t you? But so is Mrs Hudson, isn’t she? And Molly? And this idiot D.I from Scotland Yard?” Greg smiled and patted his hand.

Sherlock nodded, close to tears again.

*Good heavens. Was he going to become a weeping goldfish now*….

Greg was talking again. “And never underestimate Molly. She is much stronger than anyone gives her credit for. You know that already, don’t you? You would never have managed the Fall without her help every step of the way isn’t it? She will get over this. You didn’t do it to hurt her but to save her life. She will forgive you. It will not be easy but she will.”

Sherlock felt an ache in his chest. *So many landmines……how did the goldfish manage their lives on a daily basis, churning in this sea of emotions….he was fleetingly surprised there weren’t more murders of passion on a daily basis.*

But look at them….John, Molly, Mrs. Hudson, Mycroft….all of them alone…… all of them finding meaning in their lives.

*Maybe they all felt lonely sometimes?*

He looked at Greg and wanted to ask him what he had asked Mycroft once, long ago. But he did not dare because he simply did not know what he would do with the answer. However, it seemed as though the tables had well and truly turned and Greg was reading his mind now!

“Sherlock,” he said gently, “don’t worry about me. Married to my work remember?” and he gave him a wink.

Sherlock returned a steely glare as if to say *you can’t fool me* but Greg genuinely did not look miserable. Maybe there were people who didn’t always need someone around to feel ‘complete.’ Maybe The Work made for a good marriage partner.

He groaned inwardly as he remembered how he had never thought of what Greg might be going through as his marriage crumbled. Merely pointed out his wife’s infidelities…..and that too not very discretely.

*Oh dear god, he was going to have to do much much better in the future.*

*No wonder Mycroft always said Caring is not an advantage*….

“Mycroft…” he said, coming back to the most important matter at hand.

“He loves you.” Greg reassured him. “Yes of course he loves you. He always has. And not just as a
brother. He hides it well and of course he could never say anything about it. Surely you can understand that now.”

“But what if he rejects me again?” Sherlock asked, close to panicking. “Nothing has changed really has it in terms of the law or society or his job........I won’t be able to do this again Greg. I don’t want to be without him again. What do I do if he says no?”

“Come back and stay with me. We can grow old together” Greg said and then laughed at Sherlock’s expression. “Just kidding! Talk to him Sherlock. He has also suffered. Much more than you. He was in charge of this entire thing, remember? This is Mycroft we are talking about! Things didn’t go according to his perfect plan. Can you even begin to imagine how devastated he must be? I think you should go visit him, talk to him over the next couple of days but not about this. Just make sure he is safe and knows that you will be there for him. That should be enough for now. More than enough.”

Sherlock had become aware that he may be the intellectual genius, but this man understood real emotions. Surely if anyone knew what to do next it would be him.

So then they ordered takeaway, ate, rested and talked long into the night.

Sherlock texted John and let him know he was fine.

Greg made and received many phone calls, directing the operation from home, leaving the legwork to Sally who was more than capable of handling it. He needed to be there for Sherlock that day and it was what it was.

Sherlock messaged Mycroft the next morning.

{Are you OK ?} he typed. He deleted it.

{All well ?} He deleted that too.

{Is everything fine?} No, that didn’t work either.

He despaired and wanted to throw the phone at the wall.

Greg took it from him and typed   {Mycroft let me know if you need anything. SH}

He showed it to Sherlock who nodded and the message was sent.

The phones buzzed with a reply almost immediately.

[Thank you but don’t worry about me. Please take care of yourself Sherlock. MH]

Sherlock saw the messages and realized that Greg’s advice was good.

Mycroft would want to rebuild his mental fortress after all this upheaval and should not be approached with such life changing feelings when he felt vulnerable. It would make him push
everyone even further away.

Right now he just needed to know that he was ok.

Christmas was a just a few weeks away. Mycroft would have recovered somewhat by then. That would be the perfect time ---to erase the memories of THAT Christmas and create new ones.

Greg had promised to find a way to take the Holmes parents away to France to be with his own parents. They would certainly want to get away from everything once they found out about Eurus.

He was sure John would go with Harry and take Rosie.

Such traumatic events tended to make people seek out family, even if they were going to end up tearing each other’s hair out by Boxing Day. Sigh……..

And of course Sherlock was sure that Mycroft would have no other plans for the holiday.

That would leave him free to solve his own genuinely ‘Final Problem.’
Chapter 29

Chapter Summary

And finally we are back to Christmas present!

Chapter Notes

Maybe some of you want to take the time out to read this saga of a story from the start before you plunge into this next chapter since there were so many flashbacks over 15 years!

There are many internal monologues/ thoughts from both of them here, so for reducing confusion Mycroft’s thoughts will be underlined and Sherlock’s will not be.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

It had been 15 long years today since THAT Christmas.

This evening, Mycroft held the door open for his brother and welcomed him in, a polite smile on his face.

Sherlock noticed that Mycroft had made an effort to dress for dinner. He looked at his brother with an intensity he usually reserved only for crime scenes. He took in Mycroft’s well-fitting and elegant crimson dinner jacket with the emerald green tie.

Despite the wary and weary look in his eyes, Mycroft looked as impeccable as ever. Elegant, poised, sophisticated.

How had he managed to be blind to this for so long?!

Looking at him had halted Sherlock’s chain of thoughts and in a way he had never thought possible. But he decided he would stick with his plan as much as he could.

“Very Christmassy,” he said pointing to Mycroft’s clothes and grinned, hiding his nerves under banter. Then he looked upwards at the ceiling and asked “No mistletoe?” and smirked at Mycroft’s expression.

If only you knew, thought Mycroft. I would string up all of London with mistletoe if I could justify a kiss from you that way.

“But you look like a mistletoe yourself……..” Sherlock said slowly, an odd expression on his face. His eyes flicked to Mycroft’s lips and Mycroft tensed instantly.
Was this a danger night? Was Sherlock high?

Sherlock saw his body language and interpreted correctly. “No Mycroft. I am not high.” He said in a terse voice. Well at least not on drugs…..

Mycroft kept his expression impassive as he helped Sherlock out of his coat and took his scarf and went to set them on the coat stand. He really didn’t want to have an argument with his brother today.

As he held the coat he remembered the fateful Christmas Eve when he had gifted it to Sherlock. Surprising that he had kept it and used it for all these years despite what had happened.

As Mycroft placed the coat on the rack, he took a deep breath and let himself absorb the intoxicating molecules of tobacco, chemicals, shampoo and London that was so quintessential Sherlock. He closed his eyes and let the sensation settle into his brain. Layers upon layers of unlocked memories, desires, emotions….

What a hypocrite he was. Chanting the mantra of ‘Emotions are a chemical defect on the losing side.’ in order to protect Sherlock, while he himself had lost the battle ages ago.

To the only one who had ever been worthy.

He turned back to see Sherlock observing him and he flushed, wondering if he had been rather obvious.

Then Sherlock swept his eyes around the living room and took in every detail. He looked at the corner of the dining table that was visible from the hallway and noticed the smell of the food cooking. Cinnamon. It brought back a flood of memories from that Christmas.

Had Mycroft done it on purpose? Or had he forgotten?

“You cooked?” He asked Mycroft incredulously.

“Of course I did.” Mycroft replied smoothly. ‘This is the first time you have come home for Christmas dinner, brother mine.” Since that Christmas ages ago which you obviously don’t remember.

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Once they settled down by the fireplace with their drinks, Sherlock spoke about some case he had solved the earlier week.

Mycroft just watched the firelight dancing on his curls, the shadows which highlighted his cheekbones even more, the starburst eyes that changed colour with every flicker. The small pale triangle of skin visible just at the open collar of the purple silk shirt. His voice, his words, his brilliant deductions.

He never wanted this spell to be broken but someone was calling out his name.

“Mycroft! Mycroft?! Are you going to feed me what you have cooked or just sleep here with your eyes open! You are slipping brother mine. I told you at least three obvious mistakes in my deductions and you never pointed them out.”
“My apologies dear,” Mycroft said. “Perhaps it’s the whiskey and the warmth. Do indulge a man on his holiday.”

‘Hmm. As long as you indulge me too,” Sherlock said and winked.

Mycroft looked at him like a deer in headlights. Had Sherlock just flirted with him??

His mind was whirring with observations and deductions. Sherlock was being nice to him. He was making an effort.

It was terrifying…..and suddenly he sat up straighter.

“Sherlock, is everything fine with Dr Watson? His child? And Mrs. Hudson? And Gregory?”

“Yes Mycroft,” Sherlock snorted, immediately understanding the chain of thought. After all he had learnt from the best. “No one is dying.” He took a sip from his glass and continued, trying for a causal tone. “Is it that unusual for me to just be good company?”

Sorry brother-- I know the answer to that. How could I have been so thoughtless and cruel all these years…..and so blind?!?

“Well it’s good to know that everyone is well.” said Mycroft, still formal and careful. Like a cynical bomb squad approaching a new kind of explosive device. What was this all about then?

He wasn’t exactly complaining. It had been simply years since he had enjoyed anyone’s company as much. The fact that Sherlock was willing and wanting to even talk to him after the entire mess at Sherringford itself seemed too good to be true……And in his experience he knew that if something seems too good to be true, it usually led to disappointment.

Suddenly it occurred to him that he has asked after John and Mrs Hudson and Gregory but not Sherlock himself!

Good heavens. Was something wrong with HIM?! It couldn’t be….he had his name on an alert tag. He also had his known aliases on alert tag. But … he was quite capable of getting another alias or getting himself tested under the name of one of his homeless network.

Sherlock was staring at him, able to read his thoughts as clearly as if he was speaking. He closed his eyes in shame.

“No Mycroft.” he spoke up. “I am not ill or dying…… I am sorry.”

Sorry?! If he wasn’t dying why is he sorry?? Oh, had the entire evening been some kind of a mind game? A psychological experiment?

A cruel joke…

“Oh Mycie…”Sherlock looked at him and felt close to tears now. How horribly he had behaved with this man who had given him nothing but unconditional love and protection.

“Sorry for what?” asked Mycroft carefully, choosing to ignore for now the childhood name he had called him by.

“Sorry for having behaved so badly with you all these years that you would even consider doubting my intention today. I am so sorry Mycie. Can you please forgive me?”

Mycroft gave him a soft and sad smile. “There is nothing to forgive Sherlock……”
But before he could say any more Sherlock interrupted him.

“Mycie, people say Christmas is for families and…… the people we love……”

“Yes….and you said John was family.” Mycroft couldn’t resist reminding him.

*John--- who beat you up, More than once. Who helped you humiliate me and frighten me. John. For whom I was willing to sacrifice myself so you would be happy.*

Sherlock was silent, wrong footed. Quite unsure of how to proceed from here.

But Mycroft, as always, rescued him. “Well, anyway, brothers have never had a good time of it in the Bible either as you know. Moses, Ishmael and Isaac, Joseph and his brother. Not to forget Cain and Abel of course.”

“Am I my brother’s keeper?” Sherlock asked, raising one eyebrow.

Now it was Mycroft’s turn to be silent and look away.

“But you are, aren’t you Mycie?” Sherlock said. “You are my keeper. You have kept me safe and looked out for me and cared for me for all these years.”

“I am sorry Sherlock. I know you found my surveillance overbearing and intrusive but I knew what Eurus had become and I needed to make sure that you were safe from her and also that you ….you were not becoming like her. I needed you to be safe.”

Mycroft looked away at the fire, contemplating. *And your loss would truly and utterly break my heart.*

Chapter End Notes

Hope you are still enjoying this and thank you for sticking with this loooong story :)  
Do drop a line to say hello cos comments keep the muse happy :)
Chapter 30

Chapter Summary

The transformation is almost complete. The butterfly flaps its new wings and learns what it means to fly....

Chapter Notes

"Once upon a time, I, Zhuangzi, dreamt I was a butterfly, fluttering hither and thither, to all intents and purposes a butterfly. I was conscious only of my happiness as a butterfly, unaware that I was Zhuangzi. Soon I awakened, and there I was, veritably myself again. Now I do not know whether I was then a man dreaming I was a butterfly, or whether I am now a butterfly, dreaming I am a man. Between a man and a butterfly there is necessarily a distinction. The transition is called the transformation of material things."


See the end of the chapter for more notes

After all these years of hiding his love for Sherlock and watching him give his heart to others, spend his time with others, give them his smiles and laughter, it still hurt afresh every single time.

Despite all these years of control and even denial, it still gave him a pang to see Sherlock smile at Greg, to see him walk off with John at the end of a case.

*Like they belonged.*

While he, the man who was once his everything, and the one who loved him with a depth that no one on this earth could match…….he had to stay distant and formal and listen to Sherlock being rude and insulting and push him away.

. .

Sherlock had been observing this entire inner monologue with fascination.

*Surely he had deduced correctly. Surely Mycroft being so much more intelligent than him could see that he knew. Should he make the first move?*

He had already hurt him so much, so often. He thought of all the drugs and the nastiness and the insults and how he had pushed him away and he wanted to go to him like he used to as a kid and hug him and be comforted but he was paralyzed.

The Great Sherlock Holmes, who had no qualms about cutting anyone down verbally, was unable to open his mouth and tell this man how much he loved him and what he meant to him.
That he may have deleted the solar system because his brother was his sun moon and stars.

**Why did he need anyone else?** When he had this perfect powerful protective man in his life, who had done nothing but love him and care for him and indulge him and save him, oh so many, many times.

Whom he had punished for the crime of loving him, whom he had brought to his knees with his death wish.

**How could he even expect that the love was still there?**

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*You are the map to me.* Sherlock thought. *I have been so lost without you. I have been searching for you my whole life and you were right behind me this whole time. Mycie, please don’t reject me again. Please, please don’t turn me away. I promise I will never let you down again. I am more scared than I have ever been and I have faced Moriarty and my own death more than once. Please Mycie.*

Just then the clock chimed midnight.

“Merry Christmas brother mine,” Mycroft stood up and shook hands with Sherlock.

Sherlock stood up and took his hand and looked at him and said “Thank you Mycroft. It was a lovely evening.”

But he didn’t let go of his hand and there was something in his eyes that made Mycroft almost rock back on his heels. Something powerful being held in check but barely. Something dangerous. Something that terrified him though he couldn’t quite identify it. The very air around him seemed to be charged and crackling.

To lighten the atmosphere a bit Mycroft gave a half smile and said, “I am glad you enjoyed it. I had a wonderful time too. I am only sorry Sherlock that I couldn’t make you a Christmas present at such short notice.” He tried to withdraw his hand.

*This is it* Sherlock thought to himself. He had been a coward all evening *but it was now or never.*

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“Mycie”, he said quickly, before the moment could be lost, his voice trembling a little, gripping his hand tighter. “I don’t want any presents. All I want for Christmas is... you.”

Chapter End Notes

You must watch this video for all the feels !!!
Come on home https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fdjciI-QFIQ
Chapter 31

Chapter Summary

"Why Sherlock? Why me? When you can have anyone? Anyone at all?" Mycroft asked despairingly, still unwilling to offer Sherlock anything less than perfect happiness. “I am a flawed, broken man. You ---you are young and beautiful and brilliant…..”

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Mycroft just stood there in stunned silence.

What did that mean? What was it supposed to mean? Was this some kind of game or experiment to Sherlock?

“Sherlock!” he breathed out, not sure whether to admonish him, pinch himself, open his eyes or go back to sleep----surely this was a dream?

Too much alcohol and the warm fireplace....... he must have fallen asleep and was having one of his fantasies.

But then he felt a warm breath against his lips and was startled. This was no dream.

Somehow they had moved closer to each other and this was Sherlock, in the flesh, holding his face and oh heavens, kissing him.

At the first touch of their lips Mycroft had felt faint and then it had felt so right and so wonderful and magical........ and were those tears flowing down his cheeks?

Suddenly he pulled back. “Sherlock! We shouldn’t. We can’t! Stop it!”

Sherlock responded by touching his cheek with the back of his hand and slowly, gently stroking it down. His other hand resting on his waist, almost burning into him just by being there.

“How could you ever believe that I would shoot you Mycie?” Sherlock’s voice trembled.

“How could you point the gun at yourself Sherlock?!” Mycroft replied softly, deep sorrow in his voice. “Your loss would ....”

“Break your heart. Yes. I know that. But you were the one who told me to shoot at your heart.”

“Exactly! So why didn’t you?”

“That is what I was doing Mycie.” Sherlock said with a soft smile. “When I pointed the gun at myself, I was actually shooting at your heart. Was I wrong?”
Mycroft stood very still.

_Had Sherlock remembered that Christmas? Had the Mind Palace defences crumbled?_

He couldn’t look away from those blue-green eyes that were somehow flashing at him as well as infinitely calm. This was not an argument he seemed likely to win. He was too vulnerable now.

He had fought this for too long. He was battle weary and he had no resistance to offer any more. But Mycroft being Mycroft, he still tried. _No battle was lost until the last soldier was still standing._

So he made one last feeble attempt to move Sherlock’s hands away from his face.

Sherlock allowed him to.

Then he locked his arms around Mycroft’s waist instead and whispered “I love you Mycie. I have for years and you know that. I know you love me back although you pushed me away for my own sake. I have behaved so badly and let you down so often. I am not worthy of you Mycie but please, please Mycie, can we have this now? Please? Can you forgive me for having been so blind? And so cruel? I really am the stupid one. Please My. Can you let us have this?”

“Why Sherlock? Why me? When you can have anyone? Anyone at all?” Mycroft asked despairingly, still unwilling to offer Sherlock anything less than perfect happiness. “I am a flawed, broken man. You ---you are young and beautiful and brilliant.…”

And then Sherlock had an almost divine revelation. He saw them all--- himself, Eurus, John, Mary, Lestrade, Molly, Mrs. Hudson. Everyone broken in their own way, everyone flawed.

_The joy was not in perfection. It was in the struggle! It was in the belonging!_

_You did not have to be perfect before you could be loved. Being loved made you perfect._

He looked at Mycroft and smiled. “Yes, you are flawed and broken but only because you are human. And there is no one in this Universe who I love as much as I love you. I want only you Mycie. It’s always been you. You know that. Only you. Forever you.” He paused, waiting, but Mycroft seemed unable to respond.

So he continued. “I know you love me too. Not just as a brother. Don’t you? Please My. Can you let us have this?”

And he waited for an eon…….. that lasted all of three seconds before he felt his brother sigh in his arms.

_All weapons had been surrendered. The siege was over._

Sherlock looked into those weary and loving eyes and worshipped him.

Mycroft raised his right hand and softly, gently touched Sherlock’s left cheek. Sherlock knew that he was remembering the last time that hand had slapped that cheek.

“I am sorry” Mycroft whispered. “That day ….I was terrified….I had to…”

“No, Mycie, I am the one who should be sorry.” Sherlock said softly, holding that hand in his own,
kissing that palm. “I wasted so much time…so many years … Can you forgive me for having made such a mess of things?”

“Hush.” said Mycroft, putting his fingers on those beautiful lips. “Forgive them for they know not what they do.”

“Jesus! Mycroft…” Sherlock said.

“Yes, the very same.” he replied with a hint of a smile.

“Mycie!” Sherlock pulled away and asked in mock indignation. “Are you not taking this seriously?!”

“Life is too important to be taken seriously.” Mycroft replied with a smile.

“Oscar Wilde.” Sherlock said, tilting his head, remembering the reference.

“Yes indeed. And how right he was.” Mycroft sighed. “That day at Sherringford when I thought I was going to lose you, I realized the truth of it. My job, the rules, the world itself---it is all a mirage. The only real thing in my life is you. And my love for you.”

“Oh Mycie. All those wasted years………how cruelly I treated you. I am sorry! I am so sorry!” and he buried his face in his beloved Mycie’s shoulder and shuddered. “How much time we have wasted because of that. Please forgive me!”

“There is nothing to forgive dearest.” Mycroft said, soothing him, as always. “In life there is always a right time for everything. It is now our time to love.”

Then Sherlock looked up and in his usual imperious way declared, “Then kiss me already and stop with the talking!”

Mycroft laughed.

His heart felt so light. He felt as though his feet were no longer touching the ground.

He was floating. Free.

So many chains had fallen off that had held him down in a prison of his own making. Years and years of incarceration. Solitary confinement. Torture.

But finally he had been released. His sentence was over.

He was going home now. Where his heart was.

And he leaned forward slowly.

When their lips met again it was like fire and ice and the explosions at the beginning of time. It was stardust and firestorms and the first appearance of oxygen. It was new lands being created and supernovas exploding.

It was love.
Sherlock could sense that Mycroft was still holding back so he took charge of that kiss and gently probing with his tongue, he deepened the kiss and pushed the dinner jacket off his shoulders and pulled off his brother’s shirt from where it was tucked in at the back and allowed his hands to roam around that bare back, cool hands against warm skin, pressing himself so close to that lean body that they were as one.

He pulled back from the kiss only to whisper, “Looks like we did get each other a Christmas present after all Mycie. Come let’s go to the bedroom so we can unwrap them” and he gave a naughty laugh and bit his earlobe and Mycroft wasn’t sure if this would be his last Christmas because his heart was going to burst with happiness.

Chapter End Notes

There will be a short and fluffy epilogue so wait for it :)  
It is almost fully written up but needs some minor edits. So a day or two at the most !!!
Chapter 32

Chapter Summary

The promised fluffy epilogue with feels and squeals :)

Chapter Notes

For my wonderful fandom friends LadyGlinda and eloquated, this epilogue now ties up my Christmas gift to them in a neat bow :)

In a very exciting and fun development, eloquated and I are also co-writing a fic called 'Come, if convenient' and it involves Sherlock, Molly and some sex toys :)

If you are so inclined, do drop in and check it out!!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“Sherlock?” Mycroft asked softly, as he traced circles softly and languidly on the beautiful pale back sprawled all over him.

His fingers stopped at one of the scars and he felt the pain of the whips that had left their mark, as deeply as if they were on his own skin. He held his breath, berating himself as he always did at this memory.

*How could he have done this? How foolish they had been to imagine that Sherlock could take down such a network single-handedly.....

*How much his baby brother had suffered for two years while he himself had the luxury of sleeping on a bed and eating daily meals......he was the one who should ask for forgiveness....

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.Sherlock lifted his head, knowing exactly what rabbit hole Mycroft had tumbled into. “Mycie? What were you going to ask me just now before you started with your guilt trip?”

“Hmm?” Mycroft came back to the present. “Oh that. Yes. I was going to ask you for something.” He bent down and gave Sherlock a soft kiss. “Don’t deny me.”

At this Sherlock moved off him and lay on his side, staring up at this beloved man who had never denied him anything.

“Deny you? I am never going to deny you anything again Mycie. You know that.” Sherlock said, ducking down and snuggling back into him, almost burrowing his head into his side. “Ask and you shall receive!” he said grandly, his voice muffled, waving his free hand.
“I want to take you out on the 6th.”

“My birthday.”

“Hmm. And I have a surprise for you later.”

“Mm….ok.” came the muffled reply.

They lay wrapped up in each other for almost an hour after that, just enjoying the feeling of skin on skin, breath mingled in breath.

Just belonging.

Finally in their quiet place, far from the madding crowd.

Later, after they had showered and eaten, Mycroft took Sherlock to his office.

He looked down at their hands as they were walking through the passage and smiled. How natural it seemed that they were holding hands the entire time now. They simply couldn’t walk near each other without touching.

But of course they would have to learn how to stay apart once they got back to the world outside….

Sherlock felt rather than saw the worry that immediately coursed through Mycroft at that thought. He stopped and turned to hold his lover’s face and kissed him, deeply and slowly till they both needed to come up for air with a gasp.

Mycroft interpreted that correctly as a please don’t worry about these things, not today and he silently led them into his office room.

Once inside he unlocked a cupboard and took out a really large folder and handed it to Sherlock.

It was full of the most exquisite charcoal drawings.

Of Sherlock.

Dated one set for every year.

Sherlock stared at them in awe and fascination.

“I had no idea Mycie……..that those fingers of yours were so talented even outside the bedroom!” and he gave him a saucy wink. Then he sobered down as he looked through them. “You made one of these sets every year.”

“Yes.” Mycroft nodded. “Photographs have never done you justice. Not that these do either but at least it gave me an excuse to day dream about you as I drew.”

“These are so beautiful My. Is this how you see me?” Sherlock asked in bewildered awe.
“I see you as so much more beautiful Sherlock.” Mycroft looked at him. “Like an angel.”

“Ha. A fallen angel with black wings and a drug habit.” Sherlock said bitterly.

Mycroft put a hand on his shoulder gently. “We agreed my beloved. We don’t go down that road again. We don’t have enough time left for recrimination any longer. Ok?” He asked him with a smile. “So, would you be ready to go out tomorrow instead? I know I said 6th but everyone will be back by then. John, Mummy, Gregory. It will be much easier if we go tomorrow and get back on New Year’s day.”

“Yes of course.” Sherlock said. “Are you going to tell me where we are going or….”?

“It is a surprise. Is that ok?”

“As long as we are together Mycroft Holmes, you can take me to Mars for all I care.” Sherlock said and gave this wonderful man a passionate kiss as a reminder that this was indeed real.

This was their life now.

Together.

Chapter End Notes

Check out these incredible charcoal drawings of Sherlock/ Benedict
https://www.tumblr.com/search/benedict%20cumberbatch%20drawing
https://www.imgrumweb.com/post/BmVzFEUhXyS
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JYDlu-f1cG8
https://in.pinterest.com/pin/151363237460277915
https://in.pinterest.com/pin/671036413201311745
https://www.tumblr.com/search/sherlock%20holmes%20drawing
Chapter 33

Chapter Summary

Ahh... a honeymoon of sorts in a magical city as they ring out the old and rIng in the New

Chapter Notes

Writing this story has been a wonderful ride, especially with all the delicious comments from LadyGlinda and eloquated and all the other readers which made it more a gift for me actually :)

The muse has more in store for the new year so keep an eye out and have a wonderful holiday season with family and loved ones!!!

A crack fic is in progress called 2B or Not 2B and you are all welcome to join the apocalypse as everyone but everyone dies and our two favourite brothers are the only survivors....yeah, it is what it is :)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The next morning they left home and went straight to the airport.

Sherlock raised his eyebrows. “We are leaving London? Where are we going? Please don’t say Paris. That is too clichéd!”

“Trust me Sherlock! Anyway, you will find out soon enough.”

They boarded a private aircraft and when they were making their final descent, Sherlock looked outside and exclaimed “Venice!”

Sherlock looked at Mycroft, wide eyed and unable to believe that he had remembered.

It felt like just yesterday that Mycroft had read him this fantastic mystery story about Arthur the Amazing Detective. That story had been set in Venice and had masquerade balls, cloaked strangers hiding in dark alleyways, church bells, gondoliers singing, sunsets inside walled gardens.....it had been all kinds of wonderful and simply breath-taking.

In fact he still remembered the exact moment during the story telling that he realized he didn’t want to be a pirate anymore but a Very Important Detective, who would sweep in and solve crimes for the police.

‘Oh Mycie!” he said, suddenly overwhelmed and unable to articulate how marvellous it was to be able to live a childhood dream.

Mycroft smiled at the joy and delight on Sherlock’s face.
“Are we going for a masquerade ball too?” Sherlock asked.

“Whatever you want my dear. I am only taking you to the city. What we do once we reach there is entirely your wish.”

When they reached the palatial suite in the hotel and freshened up, Mycroft revealed the costumes that were all ready for them in the wardrobe.

Mycroft had a powder blue suit, well fitted and elegant, with lace ruffles at the cuffs and collars and cream coloured silk stockings. He wore a golden half mask and a dramatic hat with feathers in a white plume.

He looked delectable.

Sherlock wore a rich purple suit, fitting him like a glove, with black lace at the cuffs and collar. He wore a black mask that covered only his eyes.

He looked magnificent.

They stood in front of the mirror and looked at themselves standing side by side.

But they never made it to the ball.

“...” Mycroft said softly, with the faintest tremor of insecurity that only Sherlock would have been able to detect.

“Mycie, I can’t stop looking at you!” Sherlock said. “You take my breath away!”

Sherlock was truly mesmerized by the reflection in the mirror and suddenly realized that this brilliant and gorgeous man standing next to him was all his now and he didn’t want to waste a single minute of it by being in anyone else’s company.

“Let’s not go out!” he said abruptly.

Mycroft nodded, glad that Sherlock felt the same way. He had planned for it because he thought Sherlock night want to live out his childhood fantasy. But now they had adult fantasies still needing much resolution!

So he told Sherlock to look at the phone and smile.

“Seriously Mycie?! A selfie?” Sherlock said with as much disdain as he could muster.

“Yes, for Anthea.”

“What?!!” Sherlock said in shock. “She knows?!”

Mycroft laughed. “Who do you think put all this together?! House elves?”

And then he snorted at Sherlock’s blank expression. “You need to keep up with popular culture Sherlock. Harry Potter, Doctor Who.”

“Who are these people?? Why do you know so much about them??”
“Who do you think they consult when they need advice on time travel or dark magic? I even consulted on the Hunger Games from across the pond.”

“You cannot be serious!”

“I am. Very serious. Popular culture is most critical to track because it tells you what people are thinking. And what people are thinking is what makes the world turn. Slowly sometimes, but that is how change is nudged.”

Sherlock smirked suddenly. “You just use this as an excuse to indulge your own little hobbies don’t you Mycie?!” and he poked him and he tickled him and soon enough they were breathless and collapsed on the bed.

And they lay next to each other, giggling, still unable to believe that this was their life now and that they had ever had a life before this when they were not together.

Sherlock sat up suddenly and pulled Mycroft up.

“What is it Sherlock?” Mycroft asked him.

Sherlock just looked at him and with a smile he peeled off his lover’s jacket, undid the ruffles at the wrists and collar, peeled off his socks, gently and deliberately.

Mycroft smiled and returned the gesture.

“So beautiful Sherlock…..Perfect.” Mycroft murmured.

“You are beautiful My and I love you so much” Sherlock whispered against his skin.

That night they truly made love, freed of every smallest insecurity and worry and doubt.

This was always meant to be. They had found each other and they would now stay together.

No matter what it took.

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Sherlock was ravenous later as he seemed to always get after a good roll in the bed, and Mycroft was putting together some food from their well-stocked fridge, since they didn’t want to have room service disturb them.

Sherlock munched on some cheese and fruits and said “I wonder if we still have a copy of that ‘Arthur the Amazing Detective’ book in the library at home…..did the author write any more of them?”

“I am quite sure he did not.” Mycroft said.

“How can you be so sure?” Sherlock asked, instinctively annoyed when his brother always seemed to know more than him.

Mycroft looked at him oddly…….and cleared his throat. “Because I wrote it.”

Sherlock stared at him open mouthed. Then he said slowly, “You wrote the book …..that made me want to be a detective…??”
Mycroft nodded, wondering if Sherlock was upset. “You were bored. We had read every pirate book possible. I had just finished reading about the life of Dr. Joseph Bell, who observed and deduced things so I made up this story for you ……and wrote it and made the drawings…..” he trailed off.

“I am sure you know that I decided to become a detective because of that story……You made me who I am…..” Sherlock said, coming close and kissing him, the gentle kiss turning fierce as though he wanted to enter the very being of this person who had been the missing part of his mind body and soul forever.

When they parted for breath Sherlock just looked at him and finally said “My…..”

“Mine,” Mycroft replied with a smile.

And as they lay down they heard the bells toll. Twelve times.

The last year was gone. A new one awaited.

Together. Forever.

Chapter End Notes


2. Arthur the Amazing Detective is of course a nod to Arthur Conan Doyle who wrote the Sherlock Holmes stories

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!