In Praise of Plato

by Evenlodes_Friend

Summary

When John defends Sherlock against a homophobic slur, it leads to them both reassessing their friendship. Platonic JohnXSherlock. Contains swearing. First of a series of Platonic love stories transferred from their original home on FF.net.

Notes

I can't quite believe I wrote this in 2012, during which I wrote, according to my records, another 38 Sherlock fanfics! I was really on a roll in those days. Anyway, Livvy_the_Libra asked me on ff.net if I could transfer this particular fic over to AO3, as she agrees with me that its sooo much easier to read fics in this interface. So here it is. I'll try and get the rest of the series over here as soon as energy allows. In the meantime, here is old faithful with a few tiny amendments.

(Apologies to anypne who is offended by the homophobic slur used - its only for purposes of the plot.)

‘John?’

John wasn’t sure how it had come to this, but it was the calm, velvet voice in his ear that brought him back to reality.

Soft breath caressed the skin of his cheek. He realised his hand was around Anderson’s throat. The man was suspended against the wall. His lips were turning blue. His eyes were full of pathetic terror.

He gently opened his fingers, letting the skinny bigot slide down the wallpaper and into a heap against the skirting board, wheezing and clawing at his throat.

Lestrade was barking.

‘Don’t even think about starting,’ he snapped as Anderson looked up, and a whine began to form on his wheedling lips. ‘As from right now you are suspended pending disciplinary proceedings, and you’d better be down at Hendon first thing Monday morning for the next ‘Sensitivity to Diversity’ course they’re running, or you can expect your pension to be the size of a postage stamp, do I make myself clear?’

Sally Donovan opened her mouth to protest, and Lestrade turned on her too. ‘And don’t say a word, Sergeant Donovan, not so much as a squeak, or I’ll have you on the same charge, understand?’

Sally closed her mouth so hard and fast that her teeth clacked together.

Anderson had managed to scramble to his feet. Still clutching his neck, he eyed John angrily. ‘That was assault, that was, bloody GBH!’

‘I’ll do grievous bodily harm on you if you don’t get out of my sight this instant, you homophobic little maggot,’ Lestrade screamed, his face turning puce.

Donovan grabbed Anderson’s arm and helped him through the door and onto the chilly street outside. John watched them go, feeling dazed and disconnected. He became aware of a hand on his arm, and he turned to find Sherlock looking down into his eyes, full of concern.

Lestrade gulped in a deep breath. ‘Sherlock, get him out of here. Take him home and calm him down. We’ll talk later.’

They said nothing in the taxi all the way home, but Sherlock was aware of John’s rage making the air vibrate around him. When they reached Baker Street, the doctor bolted out of the cab and up the stairs to the flat, leaving Sherlock with the somewhat unfamiliar task of paying the fare. Sherlock took the stairs two at a time, but even so, he was not quick enough to witness the conclusion of John’s red mist. There was an almighty thump and the sound of wood splitting, and then some very enthusiastic swearing from the living room. When he got to the top, he saw his friend dancing around the sofa and wringing his hand, shouting:

‘Fuck! Fuckfuckfuck! Cunting bloody fucking fuck!’

The middle panel of the door was in shards.

‘Creative swearing, how lovely,’ Sherlock commented as he examined the hole in the door, opening it and shutting it so he could see the damage from both sides.

‘Fuck the fucking cunting door, Sherlock, I think I broke my bloody hand!’
‘Mrs Hudson will be displeased,’ Sherlock said with as much disapproval as he could muster over his concern, and stalked over to where John was hopping from one foot to another by the window. ‘Let me see.’

‘You’re not the bloody doctor!’

Sherlock pulled the mauled hand from between John’s thighs and examined it. The knuckles were already bruising, the skin grazed and a little bloody.

‘If you insist on riding out on your white charger to defend a damsel’s honour, the least you can do is to allow her to gloat over the wounds you sustain in the process,’ he pointed out.

‘He called you a poof!’

‘So? I’ve been called a great many worse things in my time. Some of them by you, if I remember rightly. I see no reason for you to demean yourself by doing violence to a cretin like Anderson. He is entirely beneath you.’ He was aware that his fingers were lingering on John’s hand perhaps longer than the little doctor might be comfortable with, but he couldn’t seem to help himself. He stroked the knuckles tenderly.

‘Oh, come on, Sherlock!’ John’s cry was one of exasperation. ‘I saw you flinch! He gets to you every time he opens his mouth! He hurts you!’

He raised his eyes and met John’s. You are far more observant than I ever give you credit for, he thought. Luckily, John was still in mid-rant.

‘I can’t believe Lestrade has let them get away with it all this time. It’s bloody insubordination. I’d have had them in the glasshouse in five seconds the first time they tried it, if they’d been my men! It’s disgusting.’

‘Luckily the Met has a kinder disposition than the 5th Northumberland Fusiliers, John, but I suspect that in the Army, they would have only been voicing the general homophobic milieu.’ He managed to tear himself away, shedding his coat and hunting through the kitchen cabinet for some Savlon.

‘It’s not like that now,’ John growled, typically protective of what he regarded as his second family.

Sherlock came back and dabbed some cream on the cuts. John hissed through his teeth at the sting. ‘Fairy,’ Sherlock quipped.

‘Oh, now its okay for you to say it, is it?’

‘I can say it because I don’t mean it,’ Sherlock told him. ‘Anderson does. There is hate behind his words and affection behind mine. That is the difference.’

‘I know that,’ John muttered in irritation. Calming, though. That’s something, Sherlock thought, circling his thumb gently over his friend’s hand. He realised he was getting locked in a sensual feedback loop, absorbed in the smoothness and warmth of skin he’d never had the chance to touch before, and he withdrew suddenly.

‘Anyway, you shouldn’t allow yourself to rise to his kind. Those who are ignorant fear what they do not understand.’ He swooped off to the kitchen and sat down in front of his microscope, letting his fingers reacquaint themselves with the ridged focussing knobs as he squinted into the viewing sights.
‘I don’t understand you, but I don’t attack you. It’s inexcusable.’ John bent on the kitchen doorjamb, massaging his knuckles, and watched.

Sherlock didn’t look up. ‘I don’t mean me, I mean us.’

‘Us?’

‘They don’t understand how two men can be so devoted to one another, and be sharing a flat, and not be having sex. It doesn’t fit into their stereotype system. They can’t fathom how it can be possible, and therefore they fear it.’

Then he realised what he had said and, feeling his cheeks begin to burn, pressed his brows firmly into the lenses so that he wouldn’t have to look John in the eye.

There was a long silence.

‘Devoted…’ John said softly.

‘Yes. You love me and I love you. There really isn’t any mystery about it, but for them its impossible for me to love you and not be gripped with the continual desire to stick my cock up your arse.’

John giggled. Thank God. Tension diffused. He heard the scrape of the kitchen chair being pulled out beside him, but he didn’t dare look up.

‘I do love you, Sherlock,’ John said, his voice sounding gentle, and much closer. He must be sitting very near.

‘I know.’

‘Of course you do. You’re Sherlock Holmes.’

‘No, I know because you tell me every day.’

‘Do I?’

Now Sherlock was emboldened to drag his eyes away from the slide of the mouth parts of a maggot of the grave fly, but he didn’t yet feel sufficiently composed to look at his flatmate, so he stared at the kitchen cabinets opposite, on which John had posted a dog-eared and over optimistic chore rota which listed amongst Sherlock’s jobs cleaning out the fridge on Mondays, just one of many things he never did.

‘Every morning you make me a cup of tea and put it by my bed before you leave for work. You put out cereal on the table for my breakfast, and sandwiches for my lunch, if you think I’m going to be in. At night you insist on cooking elaborate meals I never eat. You laugh at my jokes and only modestly upbraid me for being thoughtless of the feelings of others, when I deserve far worse. You actually like the way I play the violin, and you buy me nicotine patches whenever you go to a pharmacy, entirely at your own expense and without a thought for yourself.’

‘Oh, and I killed a man to save your life when I’d known you less than 24 hours,’ John added.

‘Well, of course, there is that.’ Sherlock grinned and turned to his flatmate. ‘Every morning, you give me a reason to get up and keep living, for which I am eternally grateful.’ He reached out and took John’s hand again, where it was resting on the table, to give it a squeeze. John stared at their interlaced fingers for a while.
'But I’m straight, Sherlock,’ he said, sadly.

‘So am I.’

John looked genuinely surprised.

‘Why does it always shock people that I’m straight,’ Sherlock snapped. ‘Just because I go to a decent tailor!’

‘But if we’re both—’

‘Yes, well, I don’t understand it either, but there it is. At least I don’t go around calling people unspeakable names when I don’t understand things.’

‘You do.’

‘Well, not like Anderson does, anyway.’

‘So what is this? Platonic?’

‘I suppose so. If that means that I don’t have to stick my cock up your arse. Nice though I am sure your arse is.’

‘Thank you. And no, you don’t have to. In fact, I’d rather you didn’t.’

‘Well, that’s alright then.’

Sherlock went back to his grave fly maggot.

And paused.

‘You don’t want to stick your cock up my arse, do you?’

‘Nope.’

‘I’m so glad.’

Another long pause ensued. Sherlock was aware of John watching him in a new way, with a kind of gentle intensity.

‘When did you know? I mean, about me?’ the doctor asked after a while.

That prompted Sherlock to stare at the chore list again. The truth was that it hadn’t really happened as a bolt of lightning. It was something he had grown to know.

‘I’m not sure. But you remember that first night in the taxi?’

‘The first time you deduced me?’

‘And you said—’

‘You were brilliant.’

‘And you didn’t run away screaming. I think I knew I’d come across something amazing then. It just took me a while to realise what. That I’d been waiting for you all my life and didn’t even know it.’
‘Yes.’ John nodded.

‘And you?’

‘Probably the same. You were so brilliant that first day, I couldn’t believe it. Amazing. You became an addiction, and then I couldn’t give you up. I can’t give you up.’

Sherlock smiled into his microscope.

A comfortable silence fell between them, something that Sherlock had often had reason to be grateful for. He and John were easily able to spend long periods in one another’s company without feeling the slightest need to talk, and it made him very happy. A friend is someone with whom you can be silent, he had read somewhere once, and he thought probably it was doubly so of the one you love.

‘Do you know the story Plato told about the creation of human beings?’ John’s voice was so sudden, so unexpected that it made Sherlock jump.

‘No doubt I am about to hear it.’

‘He said that Gods were lonely and wanted to be worshiped, because they were vain—’

‘I have a feeling I know where this is leading.’

‘No, you don’t. Shut up and listen. So anyway, they decided to make human beings, to be their companions and worship them. They wanted them to be the perfect companions so they made them perfect. But the problem was that once they were made, they were so perfect, so complete in every way, they didn’t need the Gods at all. Which of course made the Gods very angry. So they took each human being and split them in two, straight down the middle. Plato said that is why we spend our lives running around chasing love. Because we are always looking for the other half of our souls. That person that makes us whole.’

John fell silent for a while, and then he got up and pressed a kiss to Sherlock’s curly head. ‘I’ve found the other half of my soul,’ he whispered.

END