After being shot and invalidated from the Army, John is living a despondent life with a wife who has no respect and no love for him any longer, yet he is desperate to make their marriage work. In a last ditch effort to save their marriage, he moves them out of London and to some small, nameless town where his good friend, Mike Stamford, has been able to get him a job as a teacher at a secondary school. There he meets a teenage boy who he has an undeniable connection to, and who has the ability to make his life seem less meaningless. Though he knows that it’s wrong, John just can’t stop the relationship he is developing with Sherlock from growing. It slowly begins to spiral out of control, consuming his entire life like a wild fire and changing him in ways he didn’t think were possible anymore.
So, I haven't posted anything in a while, and I've been fiddling around with this story for a long time. I generally like to keep my tags and chapter warnings pretty accurate, so if there is an issue you would like addressed, please let me know and I will be sure to update my tags. Just to be clear, in case anyone is wondering, John & Mary are tagged in the relationships, but there is no het in this fic. Nothing but slashy goodness here :-D

Thanks to Writing Keeper for the beta, and to Indelible_Ink for the Brit-pick!

***IMPORTANT NOTE: In this story, Sherlock is just over the legal age of consent in the UK when he and John begin their sexual relationship (which is 16). If this is a trigger for you, please do not read this fic. I would like to also mention that, while Sherlock is of legal age in this story, John is still his teacher, making what he and Sherlock do in this fic illegal. While I, as the author, do not condone these actions, it was an artistic choice that I made to write my story this way, because I wanted to push my characters and story in a certain direction. Once again, if these decisions or actions bother you, please don't read.
The Slow Burn

Chapter Notes

Throughout this story, I will be linking to pictures from the series that I think go well within the chapters. They are mostly production stills but there might be a few promo pics, as well. All pictures are linked to my Tumblr account, which is NSFW although most of the pictures for this story (but not all!) are not explicit.

Also, one of my faithful readers, darkestbliss made a piece of fanart for this story. I am so very, very pleased and honored! You can find it at http://simonjyg.tumblr.com/post/131506511153/the-thought-that-someone-would-want-to-touch-all
Thank you so much!

Also also, (because I couldn't resist) I made cover art for my fic! It is on my tumblr at http://all-the-kinks.tumblr.com/post/131560199401

One last note: with my permission, this story can be reposted, remixed, or used as inspiration for any other work of fanfiction in any fandom. Thank you so much for allowing me to add to your fandom.

***

*I was all smiles when I signed on that dotted line.*

*After these thousands of miles, I don’t know what in life is mine and what’s taken from me.*

*There’s so much I could say, but I don’t know where to start…*

*I took the bullet and I never thought twice…*

*There’s nowhere left to go when it’s over,*

*I took the bullet, I took the heat, I took the fall.*

*I guess I was foolish to believe after all.*

*The Burn – Framing Hanley*

***

John Watson never thought he would end up hating his life at 35.

He never thought that he would end up discharged from the Army with a bullet wound in his shoulder and nerve damage in his arm that has effectively ended his career as a surgeon. He never thought he would have a psychosomatic limp in his leg that forces him to walk with a cane, night terrors that effectively make him look a decade older than he really is, and a most inconvenient case of PTSD. He never thought he would be married to a woman who can’t even look him in the eye anymore, after only ten years of marriage.

He never thought that he would end up a disabled war veteran with a medical degree, teaching advanced biology at a fucking secondary school.
To be fair, though, he never thought he would have to leave his life in London behind because his wife is a serial adulterer, either.

That is why he is here in this mediocre town, after all; where he is too far away from London for the steady, fast-pace lifestyle he is used to but close enough for weekend visits. A fresh start—that is what he had asked Mary for. A new life for them. If they moved away from her job, her so-called “friends”, and all of the men she slept with on a regular basis, John had promised her that their lives would be better. He would be better.

He had promised her.

And, by some miracle, she had agreed. He constantly wonders what eventually made her change her mind. She might have finally messed around with the wrong man and had an angry wife chasing after her; she might have given a man the wrong impression and he had expected her to leave her husband and start a serious relationship with him. John doesn’t know, and, frankly, he doesn’t care. All he knows is that now he’s stuck in this God-forsaken town with a woman who can barely stand to be around him.

He sighs as he turns off his car and opens the door, stepping out into the dreary morning. The gravel of the car park is wet and slick from the early morning rain; his cane hits the ground first to make sure it is solidly in place before he leans his weight on it and begins walking. Somewhere behind him, he hears a shout and turns to find Mike Stamford coming towards him, waving a hand eagerly and smiling too widely for such an ungodly hour on a Monday morning.

Mike is just about the only good thing in this situation. He and John have been friends since they were at university and have kept in touch over the years. When he told Mike about the situation with Mary and how he thought a move might fix things, Mike had been quick to offer up information about an available position at the school that he currently worked at. With John’s medical degree and credentials he already had his foot in the door, though he did have to side-step some potentially awkward questions about why he would take a job in such a different field from what his degree was in. He didn’t think that telling the head teacher of the secondary school that his marriage was falling apart during his job interview was proper job-related conversation, or that he thinks a new town where she doesn’t know anybody will prevent it from crumbling completely.

It isn’t really any of their business, anyway.

“Excited about your first day?” Mike asks when he catches up with John, throwing an arm around the blond man and making John wobble as he tries not to put too much weight on his right leg.

John just smiles at him politely and makes a vague sound in the back of his throat. He doesn’t really know how to answer Mike’s question, so he doesn’t say anything. Is he supposed to be excited to be here, at the bottom of what has essentially become the rubbish pile of his life? He keeps quiet, though, because he is grateful to Mike for helping him out. If Mike hadn’t made the offer, John would probably still be stuck in London, getting cheated on by his wife and keeping a small number of odd hours of work because all of the clinics around him were completely staffed and not looking to hire anyone full-time. A hospital wouldn’t touch him once they had one look at his history and medical discharge from the Army; cases of long-term PTSD aren’t exactly what they want in a doctor who is supposed to be keen enough to make life and death decisions in an instant.

“I know it’s nothing like you’re used to,” Mike tells him, clamping his hand down around John’s shoulder in a reassuring manner before letting the smaller man go, “but this is a nice, quiet town and I think you’ll actually enjoy working with the kids.”
“Yeah,” John agrees half-heartedly. “You’re probably right.”

They walk across the car park in silence for a little while, and the only sound between them is the steady thumping of John’s cane against the wet ground before Mike clears his throat suddenly.

“There is something that you should know about your schedule, though,” he says to John, looking away from his friend sheepishly.

John frowns in confusion, thinking about the time blocks and years he has. They gave him everything from year tens all the way up to sixth formers, and each class’s lesson plan was made accordingly. It had been trying for someone with no prior teaching experience, but he had enjoyed the challenge, happy to finally have something to occupy his mind since being discharged. “Am I going to have to rework my lesson plans?” he asks, somewhat apprehensively. It had taken him a while to finally get down all of the material he wanted to teach and he doesn’t think he’ll be able to change anything on such short notice.

Mike shakes his head, still not looking John in the eye. “No, nothing like that,” he reassures. “It’s just that, one of your students, he…” Mike trails off, and John’s frown grows. He is sure to be adding to the deep lines that already mar his face, but he hasn’t really been able to help it these past few months.

“What is it, Mike? Spit it out, already, you’re making me nervous!”

Beside him Mike huffs out a small laugh. “It’s nothing serious, really. It’s just, there’s this kid that goes to school here—his name is Holmes—and he’s, well…he’s something else.”

“What, like—”

“Gifted,” Mike cuts him off. “Brilliant, but completely and utterly strange. He, ah, doesn’t exactly have a lot of friends, and he’s even managed to make a few of the teachers—well, a great number of the teachers, actually—despise him.”

This shocks John; the fact that there are teachers in this school who can be said to despise a child is unsettling. “And I guess you’re telling me this because I have him on my timetable?”

“No, I checked for you before you came. I had figured you would, since you’re teaching advanced courses to the upper sixth formers.” Mike trails off for a moment but then gives John a big, forced smile that John thinks is meant to make him feel better. It doesn’t. “It’s no big deal. I just wanted to warn you because he…likes to cause trouble. Intelligent as hell and sharp as a tack but there’s this thing that he does…well, you’ll see. Just don’t let him rattle you, no matter what he says.”

So, John begins his first day of school nervous as hell about coming face to face with a child. As each class passes by without incident and he finally looks down at the timetable for his last lesson of the day and sees that Holmes is on the list, he steels himself. He was a soldier, for God’s sake; an Army doctor. He has been to war, been shot. He can certainly handle anything a teenager can throw at him.

Besides, he thinks as his next class begins to shuffle in and John stands at the front of the room, nervously shifting his cane from hand to hand, how troublesome could this kid possibly be?

* 

Very troublesome, as it turns out.
John makes it to the end of the class without incident, and thinks that Mike must have just been taking the piss—trying to make him nervous about his first day teaching. He is able to spot the Holmes boy right away, not even needing to take attendance to know which student he is. As soon as the student walks in, he takes a seat as far away from all of the other kids as possible and huddles into himself. Even if it weren’t for the anti-social behaviour, John can tell just from looking at the thin brunet boy that there is something that sets him apart from the rest of his peers, something different about him. When the teen looks up from his desk with startling-coloured eyes, John can see that there is a definite sharpness that isn’t common for teenagers his age, a sort of knowing gleam that seems to penetrate John’s defenses.

The man can easily understand why teachers are put-off by him.

Yet despite all of the trepidation that John has been experiencing during the day, the teenager in question stays quiet throughout John’s class, undisruptive. A part of John had taken Mike’s warning to mean that Holmes was going to be some sort of trouble-maker who would try to disrupt his class any chance he could get, but John never once has to tell the student to behave or quiet down; Sherlock Holmes sits in the back of his classroom and for all intents and purposes is completely invisible.

Halfway through the lesson there is a knock on John’s classroom door and the head teacher, Ms. Thompson, opens it cautiously, peeking in to see if she is interrupting anything. John silently waves her in as he continues his lecture. When he gets to a stopping point, he lets the class read from their texts as he limps across the room to meet Ms. Thompson by his desk. She had been the one to interview him for the position, and he finds that she is friendly and easy to talk to. When he reaches his desk, she smiles warmly at him and asks in a hushed whisper, so that she doesn’t disturb his students, “How is your first day going?”

He thinks it odd that she has waited until the end of the day to stop by and ask him this, when he could have been having problems beforehand, but he pushes that thought aside. “Yeah, good, great,” he whispers back, a little awkwardly. The students themselves have been undisruptive and well-behaved, but he just doesn’t know if this field of work is something that he can stay interested in for long. He has never wanted to live his life behind a desk.

“Good,” Ms. Thompson says, reaching out a small hand to rub tentatively down John’s arm in a friendly manner. “I’m so glad that you’re enjoying teaching here.”

He doesn’t know what to say to that, so instead he asks, “Do you happen to know any good restaurants in town? Thinking about taking my wife out this weekend.”

Ms. Thompson’s cherry-red smile droops slightly at that, but she tells him, “Oh, yeah, loads.” She launches into a list of her favourite restaurants, which John quickly drowns out as his eyes roam over his class, making sure they are all reading. When he gets to the Holmes boy, he sees that the brunet is staring back at him, a steady look that unnerves John. He turns his attention back to Ms. Thompson quickly.

“Well, I just came by to make sure everything was okay, Dr. Watson,” the head teacher is saying. “If you need anything, just let us know.” She gives him one more bright, charming smile and drops her voice just a tad lower. “You know I’d be happy to help you with any problem you have. You don’t have to worry about asking.”

“Yeah, ta,” John says, walking her over to the front of his classroom so that he can open the door for her. His cane makes a loud thudding noise in the silence of the room as it hits the ground in a steady rhythm, but he has long since gotten used to the sound that follows him everywhere he goes.
Ms. Thompson leaves and John continues on with his lesson.

By the end of the class, John is laughing at himself for being taken in by Mike’s little prank and he finds himself relaxing for the first time that day. As all of the students file out of the room, John lets out a sigh of relief, proud that he has survived his first day of teaching relatively unscathed. He turns towards the tables, intent on straightening the room up when he suddenly stops short, brought to a halt by the single solitary figure that is left behind in his classroom.

Sherlock Holmes most definitely has what John can only describe as a piercing gaze. His blue-green stare is intense and off-putting, especially when he isn’t blinking. John has to remind himself that Holmes is only a child, and there is no reason to be unnerved by him.

“Was there…something you needed, Sherlock?” John asks uneasily, despite all of his best efforts to appear unaffected by the strange boy.

“Did they warn you about me?” the student asks him quite suddenly, the question seemingly coming out of nowhere. The young teen’s voice is deep and settled already, for someone who looks so young.

“What?” John says, because he is taken aback by the brunet’s straightforwardness.

If Holmes notices John’s confusion, he doesn’t comment on it. “You’re new but you’re good friends with Stamford,” the younger male states, as if he is explaining something obvious to the man. “It makes sense that he would warn you about all of the hazards of the job. And you were watching me during the entire lesson, as if you were afraid I was going to jump up and bite you in the arse.”

“No, I wasn’t,” John says quickly, alarmed at the allegation. He has been warned about school policies on harassment and proper classroom etiquette with students. He was told that lawsuits are made out of lesser things than what this young man seems to be accusing him of. “No one has said anything about you to me,” he assures in his most authoritative voice.

It doesn’t seem to be convincing enough.

“How very professional of you,” Sherlock says, and it sounds as if it is meant to be an insult. He stands from his table, hitching his book bag over one shoulder and moving determinedly towards John, looking almost predatory in his intent. He stops in front of the teacher and John notices that they are very nearly the same height. “Your sense of honour is quite admirable, but I’m afraid it’s not going to get you very far in life.”

John gives the boy a stunned look, astounded that anyone could be so rude to someone they don’t even know, someone who is supposed to be respected in this particular setting. He is beginning to see why this kid rubs the other teachers the wrong way. “Now just wait a damn second!” he shouts, forgetting himself for a moment and frowning deeply at the student, angry. “You can’t talk to me like that, I’m your teacher! And you don’t know a thing about me so—”

“Afghanistan or Iraq?” Holmes cuts him off rudely with a roll of his eyes, sounding almost bored. John is shocked by the question coming from the boy’s mouth. It feels like being punched in the stomach. “Sorry, what?”

“Which was it, Afghanistan or Iraq?” Holmes urges, and it sounds as if he is growing impatient.

John is so stunned that he doesn’t even notice he is answering. “Afghanistan,” he chokes out and then seems to remember himself. “Sorry, how did you know…?”
“Please,” Holmes scoffs and then launches into an explanation that makes John’s head spin.

“Your haircut and the way you hold yourself clearly says military, as does the fact that your face and hands are tanned but there’s no tan above your wrists or below your neck.” The boy points to John’s hands and then up to the man’s neck, his finger impersonally close to the teacher’s body. “It shows that you’ve been abroad recently, outside in the sun a lot, although not sunbathing. But the head teacher called you Dr. Watson, so Army doctor, then. Obvious. You’ve been recently invalided home from Afghanistan and your therapist back in London thinks that your limp is psychosomatic—quite correctly, I’m afraid.”

John thinks he may end up having a heart attack, the pounding in his chest is so fast. “Psychoso—?”

“Yes,” Holmes cuts him off, not even bothering to let him finish the word, the answer is so apparent. “It’s really bad when you walk but you don’t ask for a chair when you stand, like you’ve forgotten about it, so it’s at least partly psychosomatic. That says the original circumstances of the injury were traumatic; wounded in action, then.”

*Christ*, John thinks to himself, an uneasy, nauseous feeling descending quickly on him. *Who the fuck is this kid?*

But the boy isn’t nearly done.

“And let’s not forget the nightmares,” Holmes continues, unaware that John is on the verge of having an anxiety attack from having his whole life—his deepest, darkest secrets—spread out in the middle of a poorly lit classroom by a rail-thin teenager who looks like a strong breeze could blow him over.

“How could you possibly—?” John argues, and he is proud of himself because at least he has the strength to sound angry and affronted, even if it obviously isn’t enough to deter the brunet.

“You look tired, Mr. Watson,” Holmes explains, cutting John off once again. It’s getting kind of old, that. “But not from just one or two nights spent up worrying about your new job or moving to a new city. Weeks of not getting an adequate amount of sleep, possibly months.” He gives his teacher a knowing stare that seems to hold a hint of pity in it, underneath all of the arrogance. “You’ve been to war and you were wounded in action, of course you have nightmares.”

John opens his mouth to say something else but the Holmes boy seems intent on never letting him get a single statement in his own defence out. This time he doesn’t even wait for John to speak before he is cutting the man off once more.

“Then there’s the move and the career change to try to salvage your failing marriage.”

“The what?” The kid is talking so fast that John’s brain can barely keep up.

“You are obviously new in town—you were asking about good restaurants—and this is clearly your first teaching job. You have that look about you that new teachers have at the end of their first day, wondering if it is always going to be this awful,” he explains without being prompted. John feels like he can’t breathe. “Let me assure you right now—it is. It doesn’t get any better than this, sorry. All of the students are absolute idiots; you’re just going to have to get used to it.”

John doesn’t even try to speak anymore—he knows it would be pointless to even muster the energy anyways. So he settles instead for gaping at the boy. At least he manages to keep his mouth closed.
“Your wedding ring is old,” Holmes says, looking down at John’s hand where it is resting on one of the shoddy tables at the front of the classroom. The man quickly moves it, hiding it behind his back, but it seems that the teen has already gleaned what he needs from it because Holmes doesn’t even slow down. “Ten years, give or take some, but it is also filthy. It’s not even shiny anymore. You haven’t cleaned it in so long that it’s become dull. That tells the story of your marital status right there.”

The boy gives him a quick once over and John feels distinctly uncomfortable all of a sudden, as if Holmes is rifling through John’s clothes while the man is still wearing them. “Violated” is the word that comes to John’s mind. He can feel that piercing gaze take in all of him in one sweep from head to toe—his blond hair, greying at the edges and disheveled from a long day of work, his powder blue button down, still crisp and without a single visible crease despite his tiring day. The sharp eyes then slide across John’s dark olive cardigan and down his khaki trousers to his brown oxfords, lingering along the way on his aluminium cane.

“You’re a military man who takes pride in the way he looks and always strives to be clean cut. So why would you let something you wear which other people can see be that uncared for? You’re unhappy,” Holmes answers his own question, not even pausing. “Now, it could be that it is you who is the one who cheats, but that’s unlikely. The head teacher is a very well-endowed, attractive woman and you never once let your eyes drop any lower than her face, even though she was clearly flirting with you.” He frowns at John, as if he is judging the man and finds him lacking. “It shows that you still have some sort of commitment to your wife. Besides, I would assume that being stuck with a disabled veteran who has lost any future prospects in a prestigious medical career and can’t even sleep through the night isn’t exactly the life that your wife saw for herself when she married you. So, chances are good that it is she who is cheating on you. Yet despite this, you’re still with her, so it’s not a stretch to assume that you have moved away from home in an effort to salvage the relationship.” The boy gives him another sharp, penetrating look before adding, “No wonder you’re friends with Stamford; you two have so much in common, what with the cheating wives and all.”

John is stunned speechless. Absolutely speechless. His mind is buzzing with a million thoughts—a hundred different emotions—and he wants to say something imposing, something that will let the kid know that none of what he has just said is true and that John would appreciate it greatly if the teen never spoke to him that way again, thank you very much.

But he opens his mouth and all that comes out is a pointless, “You said I had a therapist.” He sounds dazed and dumbfounded even to his own ears.

“You’ve got a psychosomatic limp and a wife who commits serial adultery, of course you have a therapist,” Holmes asserts flippantly, as if none of what has just transpired between them is a big deal. “I would say that I know enough about you to form a fairly accurate opinion, don’t you think?”

John is taken aback by the gall of this boy. Never in his life has he ever been flayed open so keenly, dissected so accurately. It’s remarkable and painful and true. Every single piece of it.

“That,” John says, licking his lips and squaring his shoulders, “was amazing.”

Holmes takes a breath as if he is about to say something, but then he seems to hear what John has just said. His sharp mouth snaps shut with an audible click of his teeth and he stares at his teacher suspiciously for a long moment, not speaking. And then, hesitantly, he asks, “Do you think so?”

“Of course it was,” John says with a small nod of his head. It may have been astoundingly rude and completely unnecessary and uncalled for, but that doesn’t take away from the brilliance of
what the teenager standing before him has just done. “It was extraordinary—quite extraordinary.”

This time it is Sherlock’s turn to stare at John in incredulity. “That’s not what people normally say,” he declares skeptically. Then he turns on his heel and walks straight out of the classroom door before John can say anything else, leaving the man wondering what the bloody hell just happened.

* 

Dinner at home is a quiet, uncomfortable affair. It usually is, lately, when he and Mary still eat together at all. Sometimes one or the other doesn’t have the fortitude for it and they make some excuse to not dine with one another. But now, being in a new town with no friends and nothing else to occupy them, John knows they will be spending a lot of silent, awkward dinners together.

“How was your first day?” John asks his wife from across the table. It might as well be a chasm between them.

Mary looks up at him for a moment, as if surprised by John asking that question. The fading sunlight streaming in through the window behind her catches in her short, bright blonde hair and John remembers that there used to be a time when he would have thought she looked beautiful just then. He might have even leaned across the table and kissed her, just because he could. But those days are long gone between them and so John just goes back to looking down at his dinner.

“It was fine,” Mary says, somewhat haltingly, as if unsure of how she should respond. “Dr. Patel was right; I got along really well with all of the staff at this new clinic, and they use the same database as the one in London, so I didn’t need a lot of training.”

“Good. That’s good.”

Silence descends upon them once more and John can’t stand it any longer so he speaks again.

“My day went well, too. I think this move was a good choice, Mary. I really feel like—”

A scoff from Mary interrupts him. She follows it up with a derisive, “Oh, John, come off it.”

“What?” John asks, not understanding.

“You agreed to this move, Mary—” John stresses, voice rising, because he doesn’t feel like taking the blame for forcing Mary to do something that they had both made the decision to do.

“You won’t grant me a divorce, what else was I supposed to do?” Mary interrupts him again, pitching her voice above his. “You won’t grant me a divorce, what else was I supposed to do?”

John stares hard at her, trying to keep his temper in check. He ends up having to close his eyes when he speaks to her, so that he doesn’t have to look at her for a moment. “You told me you would give us one more chance,” he reminds her, voice soft and slow. The anger bubbles up inside of him, threatening to choke him with its toxicity, but he has had much practice at arguing with Mary and he is able to rein it in. “That’s what you said, so that’s why we moved.”

Mary’s lips press into a thin line, as if there is something that she wants to say but she is holding it back. She does that a lot when they argue, John notices. “Yeah, well, it turns out that I can’t stand
you now just as much as I couldn’t stand you before we left London,” she tells him in a steady voice. They are biting words that are meant to cut deep, but they hardly have any effect anymore. She’s said and done so much worse to him in the past. He simply stares at her, not rising to the bait.

It seems she is yearning for a row, though, because when he doesn’t respond to her the way she wants, she continues to prod him.

“You bore me, John,” she tells him, looking him directly in the eye, and she sounds as if she is talking about the weather. He can’t be sure but he thinks he even sees the tiniest lift of the corner of her lips. Not for the first time in the past few years, he thinks that he doesn’t know who this person sitting across from him is. She used to be so warm, so loving; now she is cold and detached, a stranger. “Everything about you bores the life right out of me. At least in London there was a spot of excitement. In this place, we just have each other.”

“It used to be enough,” John says, instead of rising to her bait. His voice is steady and sure but his heart is so tired and worn. He doesn’t let her see that, though. He takes a calming breath, swallowing down everything that he wants to tell her, and doesn’t say anything else. He wants a drink in the worst way, a few fingers of scotch or a double whisky—anything to numb the hurt and anger—but he pushes that aside, too. He has purposefully kept the bottle of bourbon tucked deep inside of the kitchen cabinet, pushed to the very back corner, half empty now even though he had purchased it only a short time ago. If they are trying to start over, then John figures that he can try to be better, as well.

“A long time ago. When you were a different person,” Mary explains. “But now…” she pauses for a moment and John can hear everything that she doesn’t say. ‘But now you are nothing. But now you’re just defective. Broken. But now you are useless. The limp, the Army, the career. You’re one disappointment after another after another.’

She doesn’t have to say it because he knows it, deep down, where it wears at him and eats away at his pride, his self-esteem, his will. She doesn’t have to say it, but even if she did, John wouldn’t argue with her because she is right, she is right about all of it, and he doesn’t have the strength to fight her anymore.

It still hurts, though, and he works hard not to let her see that, not to let her see how deeply she cuts him with her words. He pauses for a moment and takes another breath, and when he exhales all that is left is the anger, white-hot and burning deep within him.

“I’m sorry I’m such a disappointment to you, Mary,” he says, standing from the table and clenching his fists tightly, one hand gripping the handle of his cane until his knuckles are white. He would never hit her, but their personal possessions have never been so lucky. “Really, I am. But I’m not ready to give up on this marriage, even if you are.” He turns on his heel and marches—as well as he can with his blasted limp—out of the dining room. His back and shoulders are tensed and straight, and his posture and emotions are military through and through.

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A/N: This story has been remixed by Maddieunhac here.
Sherlock Holmes is indeed a strange child. After Mike’s warning, John is told about the teenager from the other teachers that Mike has introduced John to throughout his first week at the school. He has found, though, that most of the warnings come from teachers that Sherlock seems to particularly hate—which is a lot of them, granted. However, John has yet to really have any problems from the kid during his class, so he doesn’t put too much stock into the stories everyone is telling him.

For the most part, Sherlock is quiet throughout John’s lessons. He sits at the back of the room and never speaks to anyone. Most days he looks as if he isn’t paying the least bit of attention to what John is teaching but whenever he hands back his homework or tests everything is always correct. John doesn’t know if he has ever given the kid anything but full marks, and there are even a few times that Sherlock hands back his work and has corrected some of John’s questions or pointed out a flaw in the material.

John can easily see how something like this can grate on some of the teacher’s nerves, but John thinks that it is fascinating. Every time Sherlock comes into his class, John finds himself watching the brunet more than any of the other students, wondering just how vast that supposedly superior brain is to everyone else’s. Many of the teachers agree that Sherlock is indeed alarmingly intelligent and frighteningly perceptive but no one can really say for sure exactly how immense his knowledge is because the boy never talks to anyone.

While John teaches, he tries not to look directly at Sherlock as much as he had that first day. Once he has given the class their work and he has gone back to his desk, though, he can’t help but let his eyes wander over to the teen.

Sherlock is lanky and just slightly taller than most of the other boys in his year, but he seems younger somehow; his face is softer and his body movements somewhat less mature than his male peers. He has a shock of dark curls that are usually messily tousled and look in need of a slight trim. He is frighteningly skinny for a child of his age and his skin is pale and unblemished. The clothes he wears look well-worn but comfortable and he changes between styles constantly. One day he wears something fitting for a teenager his age that can best be described as “street clothes” and the next he is wearing newer-looking dress shirts with black slacks that hug his slim hips along with smart looking shoes that are nicer than any pair John has ever owned.

As striking as the youth looks in comparison to his classmates, no matter what he is wearing that day, the most noteworthy thing about him are his eyes. They sit below two rather thick eyebrows and are a strange, changeable colour that John can’t help but stare at, trying to pinpoint. However,
it is not only their stunning colouring that catches John’s attention but the look behind them. There
is a keenness in the sharp gaze that is penetrating and leaves one feeling exposed when he deigns to
look their way, and John can understand why some teachers are put off by him. His eyes seem to
hold a wealth of knowledge and secrets that give him an air of maturity beyond what his body
looks like. He is simultaneously so young-looking and yet much older than he seems.

It is a fascinating contradiction.

* 

“Is he still texting you?” John asks Mary one evening, though he already knows the answer. Saw it
for himself, with his own eyes, on the screen of her mobile. A number without an ID in her phone.
The only one in her contact list that doesn’t have a name attached to it. He is pacing the room
frantically, hobbling to and fro with his cane, a restless energy building up inside of him that he
doesn’t know what to do with. He feels like he might be going crazy, living through this same hurt
time and time and time again.

“You said that you told him to stop,” he accuses her, not even bothering to look her way. He
doesn’t think he can stomach the sight of her right now. “You said we would start completely over
after the move. No secret texts, no ringing you up on your mobile, no flirting, no cheating. You
promised me.”

Across the room from him, Mary is exasperated and looks like she’s at her wits end. Like she is
the one who this is hurting. “He just had a question about the clinic back in London, John!” she
explains, her voice shrill and loud. “I’m not talking to him again!”

John continues pacing, stabbing the end of his cane into the plush carpet harshly, but he glares at
her now, wanting to have her look him in the eye when she lies to him. He won’t make this easy
for her. “We changed your mobile number, Mary,” he reminds her calmly, sounding far more
collected than he feels. “You gave it to him again. How else would he have it?”

Mary makes a noise in the back of her throat like she has just stepped in something foul, and her
face matches the sound. “Maybe one of the nurses at the clinic gave it to him!” she shouts,
throwing her hands up. “I gave my number to Teresa, in case she had any questions after I left.”

John just scoffs because he’s heard all of her excuses by now. He isn’t fooled by them anymore.
“Yeah, that’s really convenient for you,” he spits out in anger. “Fuck, Mary! What do you take
me for? I’m not an idiot, no matter what you might think.”

“God, John!” Mary yells, tangling her hands in her short hair and pulling, a habit she has picked up
whenever she is frustrated and angry. “I didn’t text him or ring him, okay? I didn’t give him my
number. I don’t know how he got it or why he decided to text me. I let you move me away from
my home, my job, and my friends. I let you change my mobile number. Why would I do all of that
just to have him ring me again?”

She thinks she’s so clever but John knows better. “Because you clearly can’t keep away from
him!” he states, his voice booming in the still of their house.

For a long moment Mary just stands across the room from him, staring at him with such anger and
disgust on her face that he can’t remember why he had ever thought she was beautiful. She lets the
silence stretch on for an indiscernible moment and when she speaks again her voice is soft and
broken, and he can hear tears behind it.

“I hate you, John,” she tells him calmly and John isn’t surprised by it; he knows it’s the truth
because she’s said it many times over the past couple of years. “I hate what you’ve done to my life, and I hate what you’ve turned me into.”

John simply glares right back at her, not fooled by her hurt for even a moment. “Yeah, well, I could say the exact same thing to you,” he says to her coldly before he grabs up his car keys and leaves his house, sick of the sight of her. He drives around until he finds a pub and spends the next few hours drowning his anger and hurt in whisky, wondering how he let his marriage—his life—get this bad.

*  

John catches Sherlock smoking on school grounds once, after the day is over. The boy is sitting at the edge of the teacher’s car park, seemingly waiting for nothing. There are hardly any vehicles left—it’s rather late in the day—and Sherlock simply sits on the pavement that borders the car park, staring off into the distance. John has to walk by him to get to his vehicle, and as he comes closer he can’t help but frown at the boy and say, “You shouldn’t do that, Sherlock. You’re on school property.”

Sherlock turns to look at John, his face blank and his gaze penetrating. “There’s no one around for it to bother,” he says off-handedly.

“It’s against school policy,” John argues. “Plus, you’re a little young for that habit, aren’t you?” Another teacher had made mention that, although Sherlock has just entered sixth form, he is taking all of his A-Levels at the end of the year and they had placed him in lessons with older students. While John hasn’t checked to find out if it is true, it makes sense when he thinks about the boy’s less mature physical appearance compared to the other teenagers in his upper sixth form classes.

Sherlock just smirks at him, as if there is some little joke that John isn’t privy to. It is the first time John has seen anything close to a smile on the kid’s face and it accentuates Sherlock’s rather full lips nicely. “I’m old enough for a lot of bad habits, this being the least worrisome, I assure you,” he tells John as he takes another drag as if to prove a point.

John doesn’t really know what to say to that so he shifts his weight uncertainly, shuffling his cane along the pavement. “Are you waiting on someone to take you home?”

“No,” Sherlock says simply and continues smoking, staring out across the car park.

John waits for him to go on but the silence only stretches. After a long moment, when Sherlock still won’t speak, the teacher prompts, “Then what are you still doing here?”

“Talking to you, obviously,” Sherlock responds, his tone snarky and the smirk back in place.

John tries not to show his irritation. He closes his eyes for a brief second and inhales, his head twitching slightly to the side. When he opens his eyes again he no longer feels as if he is about to yell at the infuriating student. He licks his lips. “Yes, but you didn’t wait around after school all this time just to listen to me lecture you about your smoking habit,” he says.

Sherlock’s smirk only grows, heedless of how he is irritating John. “That is certainly correct.” He shrugs his thin shoulders and takes another drag of his cigarette. “I guess you can say that I’m waiting around school for the same reason that you are.”

“Which is?” John prompts, even though he knows he shouldn’t.

“You obviously don’t want to go home,” Sherlock says blatantly, sparing John a quick glance and then looking off into the distance again.
John huffs beside him, shuffling his feet in his irritation. His aluminium cane scrapes along the ground gratingly. “And how could you possibly know that?” he asks, annoyed.

For the first time Sherlock turns his attention fully to John, penetrating the older man with those strange eyes of his. “You row with your wife,” he states plainly, as if it is all so obvious. “Constantly.”

John is just about to ask him how he knows that but the boy interrupts him with a wave of his hand. “She cheats on you; of course you row with her,” he explains before John can say anything. “Because of this, you usually spend a couple of extra hours after school in your classroom, grading your papers and taking more time than necessary coming up with exams and homework for the next day. You want to spend as little time as possible at home with your wife. That’s also why you come in early every morning.”

John doesn’t really know what to say. It is true, all of it, completely, but he knows that telling the boy he is correct isn’t exactly something he should do. So instead he ignores everything that Sherlock has said and replies with, “You share the same reason for waiting around the school after hours, then, do you?”

“Something like that,” Sherlock says and his face has gone shuttered and emotionless.

* 

“The clinic is hosting a blood drive next month and I told Marsha that you and I would spend the weekend walking around downtown passing out adverts for it,” Mary tells him one Saturday afternoon. John has been sitting in his chair enjoying the newspaper while she has been bustling around the house, cleaning up from their past week. At her words, though, John looks up at her from behind the paper, frowning.

“Mary, I won’t be able to do that,” he argues, angry that she would do such a thing without consulting him about it first. “My leg—” he begins, but she cuts him off with a scoff.

“You and your sodding leg, John,” she says with a roll of her eyes. “You didn’t even get shot there—I don’t understand why you complain about it so bloody much.”

He bites back the words that spring into his mouth immediately. Even though he curses the damn limp every day of his miserable life he can’t help but get irrationally defensive about it when she talks like that, like he’s faking it or something. He takes a deep, calming breath and closes his eyes for a moment. When he opens them back up he is composed once again. “You don’t have to understand. You just have to have a little consideration and not offer me up to do unnecessary jobs.”

It’s quite simple, really, and he can’t comprehend why she doesn’t get that.

“Fine, John,” she says and he can tell she is angry now, glaring at him. “I thought you would be happy about the time we would spend together but I guess I was wrong. I’ll be out all weekend, then.”

She leaves the house without another word and he sits in his chair with a glass of scotch in one hand and his cane pressed against his twinging leg, surrounded by an oppressive silence.

* 

He takes the opportunity of a free weekend to meet up with Mike for a few drinks. He gets to Mike’s local early and has a couple pints on his own, enjoying the loud sounds of the pub that have
nothing to do with him.

“How are things with the missus?” Mike asks when he finally shows up, throwing himself down into a bar stool next to John with a sigh and motioning to the bartender with one hand. Mike comes here so often that the wizened man behind the counter doesn’t even have to ask what he drinks. Just pours it and slides it along the bar top to Mike.

John sighs and rubs a hand over his face. “Not any better than they were in London. Worse, maybe. At least back in the city she had friends to blow off steam with.” He looks into his pint of beer dejectedly. Is this his third, fifth? He doesn’t know anymore. “She doesn’t know anyone here so she spends a lot of time at home. We’re driving each other round the fucking bend.”

“Sorry to hear that, mate,” Mike says, and he sounds sincere. If anyone knows what John is going through, it’s Mike. “I’d tell you that she could ring up Rebecca but,” he pauses for a moment, as if he is choosing his words carefully. “I don’t know how I feel about those two becoming friends. They’d probably chatter on about what horrible husbands we are and give each other tips on how to mess around behind our backs and not get caught.” He suddenly winces, as if he has just heard what he has said. “Sorry. I shouldn’t talk about Mary like that.”

John just laughs, though, and it feels nice to do it. He feels almost human again, with a few beers in him and a good friend sitting next to him. “No, it’s all right. It’s true,” he agrees with a self-deprecating shrug. “They’d probably end up comparing notes or something.”

Both men laugh perversely at that and then trail off uncomfortably. They may make jokes about it, but the pain is very real, and they can’t forget that.

John sighs and stares deeply into his pint again, as if it holds all of the answers of life. For some people, his sister included, it does. He almost wishes he were one of those people right about now. It would be nice to be able to leave everything behind day after day, drinking it away. “God, Mike,” he says with a tired sigh. “Why do we put up with it?”

For a moment Mike looks like he is about to answer, but then he goes quiet. Then he says with a shrug and a sigh of his own, “Because we love them, I guess.”

“Do we?” John asks, surprised.

“Well…we loved them once,” Mike amends. “That’s why we married them.” He smiles flagrantly and for a split second John can see the young man he had known all those years ago, back in university. “Every time I think about leaving her, all I can see is that teenage girl who used to worship me. I keep hoping that girl will come back. That’s why I stay,” he tells John, the smile growing in size but also in sadness.

John nods. He can understand that. “Mary was the same way,” he agrees, and he feels a smile of his own coming on. “God, did she love me back then…but then I went and got myself shot and now she can barely stand to look at me. She thinks I’m a joke. An embarrassment to her. The end of my career, the limp, the PTSD, the nightmares, the miscarriage we went through a few years ago. To her, I’m just one disappointment after another. Why wouldn’t she cheat on me?” He pauses for a moment and then says wistfully, “She used to not be able to keep her hands off of me. Now…you know it’s been over a year since we’ve had sex?”

Mike chokes on his beer and splutters. “Blimey, mate. That’s an age,” he says with something akin to pity in his voice.

“You’re telling me,” John says ruefully, draining the rest of his pint.
Mike shakes his head, a look of disbelief on his face. “That’s got to be rough. Although I can’t really talk. Becca and I hardly touch each other, either. But at least it’s more often than that.” He grimaces, probably at the thought of not getting off in that long, and takes a long swig from his pint.

“She said that she didn’t like doing it with me. That I couldn’t even give her a proper shag.” The words are out of his mouth before he can stop them and he instantly wishes he can take them back. He must be more sloshed than he realises if he is wagging his lips this much. He pushes his pint away and decides not to order another.

Mike lets out a low whistle. “That’s rough, mate. I can’t even imagine how it would feel if Becca said something like that to me.”

John just shrugs, as if telling Mike ‘It hurts, but you live with it….Well, you don’t die from the shame of it at any rate’. He doesn’t say that, though. Instead he says, “Maybe she’s right. A few times I’ve thought about picking up some woman and just having a quick shag in the loo of a pub, just to get back at Mary, but then all I can think about is being crap at it.” He frowns at himself in his reflection in the dirty mirror lining the back wall behind the bar. He hardly recognizes himself. “I think I’d feel even worse afterwards, if that were the case. First time I could get back at Mary and I wouldn’t even be able to do it properly.”

“Literally,” Mike says with a laugh, more than a little inebriated himself.

“I’m probably never going to fuck anyone again in my life,” John moans dejectedly, slumping down in his seat sullenly. “It’s a good thing my hand still likes me and can do it proper, or else I’d go mad.”

Beside him, Mike laughs as if that’s the funniest thing he’s heard all day.

* 

John spends all of Sunday lounging around his new house, nursing a vicious hangover and basking in the silence of Mary not being in. It really is a lovely home in a nice neighbourhood. He wishes that he and his wife were able to enjoy it more, instead of turning it into a battleground for their marriage. He relaxes exponentially during his time alone and by the time Mary comes home that evening he is more than willing to spend a night not rowing with her. So they speak to each other carefully about inconsequential things and dinner doesn’t turn into a war zone. John is relieved and happy, and he falls asleep quickly that night once they retire to the bedroom.

Unfortunately his dreams don’t care how well his day went. He ends up waking suddenly in the middle of the night, dripping with sweat as he hears echoes of gunfire and men screaming in agony. His breath is coming in deep, heaving gasps that he can’t get under control and his leg aches so badly that he whimper. He reaches a shaking hand down in the dark to clutch at it just to see if there is something cutting into his flesh that is causing such pain. He has obviously been writhing in bed for some time now because the duvet is completely twisted around his body, tangled up in his legs, and Mary is stirring beside him, groaning at being woken up in the middle of the night.

She reaches behind herself to yank roughly at the duvet, heedless of the pain the sharp movement causes in his leg. From the other side of the bed where she is facing away from him, he hears her sigh heavily through his labored breathing.

“Another one, John?” she asks irritably.
“Yeah,” John gasps out, his breath still not quite under control. “Sorry.”

“Just try to keep it down,” she mumbles, already falling back asleep. “I have work in the morning.”

* 

A few more weeks pass by in which John tries to settle into his new life. He argues with Mary often and becomes a regular down at the pub, even meeting up with Mike every once in a while to share a pint. Mostly, though, he just goes to work and puts a lot of attention into his lesson plans and course material. He has even taken to creating work specifically for Sherlock, something that keeps him occupied and helps the student out. He doesn’t grade Sherlock on those particular pieces of work; it is just extra information that he gives to the brunet to further his knowledge. He finds that Sherlock has a passion for human anatomy and physiology, and John is more than happy to share his expertise in that area.

He is surprised that Sherlock soaks up every extra piece of information that John gives him like a sponge and even seems grateful to the man for giving him something more substantial than upper sixth form work to occupy his mind. He takes to asking John for more and more work, and John delights in spending the time finding things that might interest the youth, causing him to stay at work late or come in early some mornings.

A few times, as John leaves school long after the day is over, he sees Sherlock walking about the town, stalking down residential streets or hurrying along the pavement downtown, always with a lit cigarette in his hand or his mouth, no matter where he is at.

John begins to wonder if the boy ever goes home.

* 

The first time he drives into town at night and goes to the small, warm-looking coffee shop is because he and Mary have a massive row about the washing up, of all sodding things. John has already been to the pub every night for the past five days straight, and he doesn’t much feel like becoming one of those sad old men who spends every night of the week hiding down at his local. So he parks his car in one of the designated spots by the kerb of the coffee house and goes inside, pleasantly surprised by the homey feel of the establishment. He orders himself a cuppa, finds a nice spot tucked into a dimly lit corner towards the back of the shop, and is surprised by the tea. It’s excellent.

He drinks it slowly, savouring it. It reminds him of the tea his mother used to make, back when he was little. He has always wondered why hers never failed to taste better, and why he can’t ever replicate it. When she was still alive, she swore up and down that she didn’t use anything fancy, just PG Tips, but he is positive that it was different somehow.

He lets himself get lost in his memories for a while, winding down from his row with Mary and feeling the tension slowly drift away. When he finishes his tea, it is still a decent hour and he isn’t ready to go back home yet, so he orders another and drinks it a bit slower. When he finally feels that he can’t possibly put off going back any longer he sighs and bins his Styrofoam cups, leaving the warm glow of the coffee shop and stepping outside into the dark.

As he opens the door he bumps into someone who has stopped in front of the entrance, their head down and their toe busy stomping out a cigarette butt on the ground, not paying attention.

“Sorry, mate,” John says off-handedly and the person looks up at him. He is surprised to see that
“Oh, Sherlock,” he says, smiling politely. “What are you doing out so late?”

The dark-haired teen stares at him out of his odd-coloured eyes for a second before answering. “I could ask you the same thing, Mr. Watson, but I already know.” He smirks and John already knows what will come next. He braces himself for it, but it doesn’t really matter. Nothing helps.

“Had another fight with your wife, stormed out, didn’t know where else to go,” Sherlock says unambiguously, as if he’s reading John’s life off of a page from some boring play. “It’s too late to go to a friend’s to talk about it and going to a pub just seems depressing to you. So you decided to get a cuppa; nice, safe, guilt-free. You do rather like your life on the safe side, don’t you? Bland, like your clothing and your tea.”

John bristles at that. “There’s nothing wrong with the way I take my tea, I happen to think it tastes best that way,” he defends, stabbing the tip of his cane into the pavement, but then he shakes his head as he realises that his tea is not the most important issue at hand. “And stop doing that,” he adds, backtracking. “You’re not meant to know so much about a teacher’s life. It’s not done.”

Sherlock just smiles and pulls another cigarette out of a crumpled soft-pack he digs out of his pocket. “That’s why most of the other teachers hate me,” he mumbles as he places the fag between his lips and lights it. “But not you. It’s...interesting.” He takes a long drag of his cigarette and for some reason John can’t help but stare at his mouth where it purses around the filter.

“How many of those do you smoke a day?” he asks suddenly, because he can’t for the life of him think of anything else to say.

“What does it matter to you?” Sherlock responds, a strange mixture of a frown and a smirk settling on his young face.

John fidgets because this isn’t really the answer he is expecting a student to give a teacher, and he doesn’t know if he should tell the boy to watch his tongue. Said tongue flicks out to wet his bottom lip where the filter of the cigarette has pressed into it, and John forgets why he should be mad.

“It’s just, I always see you smoking whenever you aren’t in school,” he says, because if he doesn’t do something to make this conversation seem more normal it will turn into something awkward and uncomfortable. “It’s not healthy, you know.”

Sherlock lets out a derisive laugh that sounds nothing like the ones Mary aims at him when John has said something particularly dense. He finds that he likes the sound of it coming out of Sherlock’s mouth. “Mr. Watson, I have a genius level IQ. Do you not think I know that smoking is ‘unhealthy’?” He’s smirking at John again, those full lips twisted beautifully, and the action looks so natural on Sherlock; it is like he spends his days sneering at those of lesser intellect than he. John thinks that might just be true.

“If you have a genius level IQ, what are you doing at a shitty secondary school like the one here?” he wonders instead, veering the conversation in a completely different direction. He’s curious now, though.

“What?” Sherlock asks, caught off guard. The smirk drops a tiny bit and he frowns slightly, as if he is confused by the question.

“If you’re so smart, why aren’t you off at some fancy private school, getting a better education?”
John clarifies, though he knows Sherlock understands what he is asking him.

The smirk is completely gone now and Sherlock stares at John through a blank, expressionless face. Then a small frowns creases the skin between his thick eyebrows and John can see his eyes flicker ever so slightly over the teacher, as if the boy is looking for something, contemplating something. Whatever it is, Sherlock seems to find it, because after a moment’s pause he responds.

“I have difficulty adapting to normal social situations and new surroundings,” he says, and for the first time ever John hears something in the boy’s voice that isn’t arrogance or disrespect. John wonders if this is what Sherlock sounds like normally and if what he portrays at school is just a mask. Because if John didn’t know any better he would say that Sherlock sounds…young. “Even at a secondary school level, where children are supposed to be more mature by this age, you have seen the results of my…peculiarities. I managed to advance through sixth form and that’s why I’m taking my A-Levels at the end of the year. But the results of leaving peers of my own age behind were…disagreeable. I’m not good with people. If I were to go to another school, I’m afraid the consequences would be just as…unpleasant, if not more so.”

John doesn’t know if he will ever get used to such mature-sounding words coming out of a body so young. It is slightly disconcerting, yet wholly interesting. He pushes that aside, though, and frowns at the child in front of him. “So you’ll just waste away in this sodding town and throw all of your potential out the window?” he asks a little too harshly, a little too angrily, his hand tightening over the handle of his cane.

Something flickers across Sherlock’s face. That unguarded, young expression closes off once more, as if it had never even been there, and John mentally kicks himself for being so brash. Sherlock spares a moment longer to stare at him coldly before he replies, “It seems good enough for you.”

He may have deserved it—may have even asked for it—but Sherlock’s answer angers him nonetheless. He tells himself that it makes him mad because it is disrespectful and flippant but John really knows that it makes him mad simply because it is true. Everything Sherlock has ever said about him is true and they both know this is, too. Instead of admitting to it, though, his shoulders go rigid and his mouth sets in a hard, thin line, his forehead furrowing even though he knows it accentuates every one of his many wrinkles. “Good night, Holmes,” he says coldly, draining all affability from his voice as he addresses the student in front of him. “I expect to see you in class tomorrow, not skiving off because you decided to have a bit of a lie in after your caffeine fuelled all-nighter.”

With that he takes his leave, cane tapping solidly against the pavement as he walks away, not waiting for Sherlock’s response. On the drive home, John grips the steering wheel hard and tries not to think about the teen.

He fails miserably.

* 

A week passes by, dreary and wet. He and Mary barely speak at all during that time and so they hardly fight. John has not gone back to the coffee shop where he ran into Sherlock. For his part, the dark-haired boy mostly just sits quietly in the back of his class, not speaking to anyone and—John thinks—not even paying attention to the lessons. As usual, though, when homework or exams are turned in Sherlock always gets perfect marks, and seems to devour all of the extra material that John gives him.

The man wonders if Sherlock excels in all of his classes the way he excels in John’s. Though the
teen seems perpetually bored or devastatingly uninterested during lessons, there is no denying that Sherlock knows his course material. It fascinates John endlessly. Everything about Sherlock fascinates John even though the older man knows that it shouldn’t. He tries to tell himself that he is simply looking out for Sherlock’s welfare; that he only has Sherlock’s best interests at heart. And he believes himself rather easily.

So when he is driving home from work one day in a torrential downpour of rain and sees the strange teen walking home without even so much as an umbrella, he stops to offer him a ride and doesn’t think twice about the unseemliness of it.

The boy can’t walk home in the rain, after all, John tells himself.

For a moment Sherlock looks as though he is going to refuse John’s offer. But the rain is coming down so heavily that the inside of John’s door and his arm are soaking wet from having rolled the window down to shout at Sherlock, and John can feel that it is a bitterly cold rain, the kind that stings when it hits skin. It is only another second or two before Sherlock gives in and walks around the car to get into the passenger seat.

“Christ, Sherlock,” John swears as the boy all but falls into his car, slinging ice-cold water all over the upholstery and the remaining dry half of John’s jumper. “What on earth made you think that you could walk about in this?”

Sherlock huddles into himself in the seat and John can see that his jacket is much too thin for this time of year, aside from being completely soaked through. John quickly turns on the heat and cranks it all the way up as he notices Sherlock shivering.

“I…h-had to get h-home somehow,” the boy answers, still cheeky even when nearly hypothermic.

John starts driving again, knowing that the weak heat coming out of the vents will get warmer if he keeps the car moving. Out of the corner of his eye John can see Sherlock bring his fingers up to his mouth and blow hot air onto them, trying to get some feeling back. Sherlock’s hair is sopping wet and plastered to his forehead in a way that looks like it should be uncomfortable and irritating, but once his fingers are sufficiently warm enough Sherlock’s hands go immediately for his pack of cigarettes (which seem to be the only thing of importance that Sherlock strove to keep dry in the rain) instead of pushing his fringe out of his eyes.

It takes the boy a few tries to light the cigarette because his hands are still a bit shaky, but he doesn’t give up. John frowns at the road, but doesn’t spare Sherlock a glance. It is dangerous to drive in this kind of weather, after all.

“You shouldn’t do that, you know,” he says, not looking at the teen.

Next to him, Sherlock finally gets the cigarette lit and takes a long, slow drag. John can hear the paper burning as Sherlock inhales. He takes his time exhaling, and John simply waits for his response, frown in place.

“Really?” Sherlock says finally, as he exhales the last bit of smoke. The acrid scent of the tobacco and the thick fog of it fill John’s car and he knows he’s going to have a hell of a time getting the smell out. As if he knows exactly what John is thinking, Sherlock smirks and takes another, smaller drag and says, “Are you going to stop me, sir?”

The last word sounds teasing and John doesn’t rise to the bait. He doesn’t say anything at all. Sherlock’s smirk grows at John’s silence. He shouldn’t be able to seem so haughty while he’s
sitting there looking like a wet cat, hair plastered to his head and clothes stuck to him oddly, making him look skinnier than he seems, which is already bordering on frightful. But he does, and it only grows the longer John stays silent.

“That’s what I thought,” Sherlock says, nodding as if he has just proven something. He leans back against the seat and takes another drag. “Perhaps your wife cheats on you because you’re such a push-over. Did you ever think about that?”

That catches his attention. “What?” he asks—almost yells, really—caught off-guard by such a complete lack of disrespect and common decency.

“You’re a push-over,” Sherlock repeats, as if John is asking because he simply hadn’t heard him correctly. There is a hint of something akin to manic glee in the boy’s voice when he clarifies, “Here I am, underage and in your car, smoking in front of you, a doctor and my teacher, and all you have to tell me is ‘you really shouldn’t do that’. Then when I ask if you’re going to do anything to stop me, you shut up. I could light this whole pack up and dump all the ash right here in your car and you probably wouldn’t do a damn thing about it, would you?”

John’s hands tighten around the steering wheel but he doesn’t say anything. He’s not sure there is anything to say to that. He doesn’t know if it’s true or not, but Sherlock has been spot on about everything else he says about John, so why not this, too?

Sherlock takes John’s silence as permission to continue harassing him. “How long has she been cheating on you?” he asks bluntly.

“I don’t really think that’s an appropriate question for you to be asking me,” John responds, voice gone hard.

“Tell me how long she’s been cheating on you,” Sherlock says, voice steady.

John keeps his mouth closed, rather proud of himself. A second later he is speaking, though, and he doesn’t even know why. “A while,” he says and mother of Christ, why is he talking about this? With a student, no less! “Years. She did it a couple of times when we were teenagers but mostly stopped when we were at uni together. She’d just break up with me instead. I think she started up again after I was deployed. Definitely since I was invalided back.”

God, what is this boy doing to him? He hasn’t even told Mike this, and his head is spinning, his blood pounding in his veins. He wants to blame it on the smoke that is slowly filling his car, perhaps a second-hand nicotine buzz if Sherlock’s cigarettes are strong enough, but he knows that’s not the truth. He keeps trying to lie to himself, anyways.

“I shouldn’t be telling you any of this stuff,” he says, mostly to himself. “But I just seem to lose all sense of myself when you talk to me.”

Sherlock decides to completely ignore what John has said, and maybe it’s for the best. “So she’s cheated on you practically the entire time you’ve been together, yet you’ve stayed with her.”

It’s not a question. It is a statement of fact, as if Sherlock just needs to hear it spoken out loud for it to make a little more sense. It still doesn’t make sense to John. “Interesting,” Sherlock says, and takes another drag of his cigarette.

“Where do you need me to drop you?” John asks suddenly, because he is afraid that if Sherlock asks him anything else he won’t be able to stay quiet again and this has been embarrassing enough as it is.
“You can just leave me at the coffee shop where we ran into one another the other night. I’ll wait out the storm there.”

John thinks it’s a bit strange that he doesn’t ask to be taken home but doesn’t comment on it. He only says, “It may be a while before the rain clears up.”

Sherlock takes another drag of his cigarette and looks out the passenger window while answering.

“I don’t mind the wait.”

*

He and Mary row again that evening and when John leaves—driving away in the rain that is still pouring down—he is half-way to the coffee shop when he remembers that Sherlock will most likely still be there.

He turns his car around and heads to a pub instead, but it takes every ounce of his strength to do it.
He doesn’t know how it happens but he ends up running into Sherlock again at the coffee shop a few more times.

Well, that’s a lie. He knows exactly how it happens—very deliberately, is how it happens.

So deliberately, in fact, that John can fool himself into believing that he truly had no idea that Sherlock would be at the shop at all and isn’t it interesting to see him there?

If Sherlock knows the truth—which he always does—he doesn’t say anything about it, and John is immensely grateful.

*

One night, John enters the coffee shop but doesn’t see Sherlock anywhere in sight. He orders his usual cup of tea, sits at a table, and tells himself that he isn’t waiting. He’s just having a cuppa. He isn’t looking up expectantly every time the door to the coffee shop opens. He isn’t checking his watch to see how late it is.

He orders another tea and does not wait around some more.

It is late by the time he decides to head back home. He doesn’t usually stay out ‘til this hour but he also usually runs into Sherlock earlier, so it’s understandable. He is getting ready to leave, gathering up his rubbish and his cane, when the door opens once more and Sherlock walks in, scowl on his face and seeming to be in a terrible mood.

He heads to the counter and orders his usual—something ridiculously caffeinated for this time of night—and then turns on his heel and heads directly for the table where John is still sitting.

“Bad day?” John asks, a little worried. He has seen Sherlock in moods before but the boy seems particularly agitated tonight.

At John’s words, though, the scowl slowly leaves Sherlock’s face. He looks at John for a moment and the man can see his whole body begin to relax. “Better, now,” Sherlock says, and John tries hard not to blush.

He knows he shouldn’t be letting his student say things like that to him—hell, he shouldn’t be
meeting with his student in the middle of the night at coffee shops at all—but he forgets sometimes that Sherlock isn’t an adult. The way the brunet speaks and the things that the two of them talk about aren’t the type of conversations a normal teenager can understand. Sherlock has a penchant for medical procedures and human anatomy that surprises John and has given them endless topics of conversation the past few days. The handful of times that he has “accidentally” run into Sherlock at the coffee shop he has found that they have never run short of things to talk about.

All of that can be rationalised, though, if anyone were to ever find out about their late-night meetings. They aren’t doing anything scandalous. John has always made sure of that. Just a student and a teacher running into each other at a coffee shop a few nights a week. What Sherlock just said, though, John would think is bordering on flirtatious if he didn’t know any better. So instead he ignores it and clears his throat to cover up the awkward silence that has descended between them. “I didn’t think you would make it tonight. It’s late,” John says, hoping Sherlock will follow the change in subject.

The barista comes up to their table with Sherlock’s order and the youth takes it. “Yes, it is,” Sherlock says to John, deliberately vague. There is something wrong, John can tell, but Sherlock makes no mention of it. He is unusually quiet tonight and John wonders—not for the first time—what it is exactly that Sherlock gets up to after school hours. Sometimes when John runs into him he is covered in mud or grass stains, and other times he sports fresh or healing bruises along his face. Once he had a gash on his hand that John had to see to with the small first aid kit that he keeps in the boot of his car.

He never asks Sherlock about it, even though the curiosity eats away at him. He tries very hard to keep their conversations to a strictly educational line of topics, and Sherlock’s hobbies and interests are not part of that subject matter.

He is so lost in his own thoughts that he nearly misses what Sherlock says next, it is mumbled so low.

“Today is my birthday,” Sherlock states, not meeting John’s eye. Instead he stares down at his coffee, fiddling with the plastic lid as if he hasn’t said anything at all.

“Sherlock!” John cries out, surprised. “Why didn’t you say something earlier when I saw you at school?”

Sherlock simply rolls his eyes. “What would have been the point?” he asks with a shrug. “It’s not like there’s anyone who will do anything for me.”

John frowns at Sherlock’s unaffected tone. “Well that won’t do,” he says, mostly to himself as he looks down at his watch. 11:51. “Come on,” he tells the boy, standing up from the table and heading towards the counter. The barista rouses herself from her half-sleep and smiles tiredly at them.

“Something else for you two?”

“Let me have that cupcake in the display. The chocolate one,” John says, leaning his cane against the counter and pulling out his wallet.

The girl just waves her hand and produces the cupcake. “Don’t worry about paying. I’d have just thrown it out at the end of the night anyways.”

“No, I’m going to buy it,” John insists, digging in his wallet for a few quid. “It’s a present.”
The barista just shrugs as if to say it doesn’t matter to her one way or the other and totals up the single cupcake. She hands it to John and the man immediately grabs his cane as he heads towards the door and exits the shop, Sherlock following behind him confusedly.

“What are you—?” the boy begins to ask, but John cuts him off.

“Get out a cigarette,” John interrupts rather abruptly as he stops just outside the door on the pavement. It is a dark night but this area of town is well-lit, the streets lined with tall lamps and eclectic shops that keep odd hours.

“What?” Sherlock asks with a frown, and John can tell he is well and truly confused now. John smiles at this sudden achievement. It isn’t often that Sherlock is confused by anything and John thinks that the look on his face is quite adorable.

“A cigarette,” he repeats, deliberately not clarifying. “And your lighter.”

Sherlock continues to frown but takes a cigarette out of the crumpled pack he digs out of his pocket.

“Light it then give it to me,” John tells him.

Sherlock does as John orders him and then passes the lit cigarette to the doctor.

Smiling widely, John takes the cigarette and sticks it—lit end up—into the centre of the cupcake, holding it out to Sherlock proudly.

“Here. Happy Birthday.”

“Mr. Watson…” Sherlock trails off as if unsure of what to say. John doesn’t want to think that maybe it is because no one has ever given the boy anything in his life.

He clears his throat and licks his lips nervously as another awkward silence threatens to descend upon them but he intercepts it. He jabs his cane into the pavement nervously. “Come on, take it,” he says, pushing the cupcake towards Sherlock. “Do you want me to sing to you?”

At that Sherlock grimaces and John can’t help but laugh. “No, that won’t be necessary. This is sufficient,” Sherlock says and then pauses a moment. John can see him blushing in the weak phosphorescent lighting around them only because Sherlock’s skin is so beautifully pale. “Thank you,” Sherlock whispers to him and reaches a hesitant hand out to take the cupcake from John’s grasp.

There is a heavy silence that follows and the two do nothing but stare at each other for a moment until John rouses himself and worries about what this might look like to someone passing by. He clears his throat again and takes a step backwards, away from Sherlock, placing his hands behind his back, linked at the wrists. One hand clutches onto his cane tightly. “Well then,” he breaks the silence. “You have to at least make a wish.” He indicates the glowing ember of the lit cigarette as it slowly eats away at the paper and turns it into a delicate ash that keeps its shape while Sherlock holds it steady in his large hands.

“No need,” the boy tells him and smiles—a true, genuine smile that John doesn’t think he has ever seen on the thin angular face. “It already came true.”

*  

“So, now that I’m legal,” Sherlock says one night as they grab their orders—a tea and a chocolate
muffin for John and a double espresso for Sherlock—and head towards a table at the back of the shop, “let’s have dinner.”

John laughs as he sits down across the table from the teen, propping his cane against one of the empty chairs. “Nice try, Sherlock. You’re still my student, and you’re only sixteen, so the answer is a resounding ‘no’.” He smiles as Sherlock pouts. “Besides, I’ve never seen you eat a meal. I didn’t know ‘dinner’ was even in your vocabulary.”

“I’d eat for you, Mr. Watson,” Sherlock says coyly and John gets that feeling again, that feeling that Sherlock is supersed ing all of John’s efforts at propriety and is flirting with him in a strange, poorly-attempted kind of way.

John chooses to ignore the flirtatious undercurrent to Sherlock’s words, however, and decides to take them at face value. He pushes his purchase towards the brunet across the flat expanse of the tabletop. “Then why don’t you start with this muffin and we’ll go from there.”

* 

“If you must know, I’m down to a pack a day,” Sherlock tells him another night as they sit across from each other. He seems to be proud of himself as he says it.

John, though, can’t help but be horrified. “You’re down to a pack?! You’re sixteen years old!” he shouts, forgetting for the moment that they are in a public place. Though “public” is a loose term. Their meetings have been getting progressively later and later, and at this time of night no one is around to give them curious looks.

“Exactly,” Sherlock states pointedly, “and at fifteen, I was at two a day. You should be proud.”

John just shakes his head in astonishment. “You’re unbelievable,” he says on a sigh.

Sherlock smiles. “Thank you.”

“No, that wasn’t a compliment,” John is quick to clarify.

That unfamiliar confused look descends on Sherlock’s face once again. He shakes his head as if he doesn’t understand. “It sounded like one to me.”

“You’re an idiot,” John says fondly, and they both laugh.

* 

“So, do you have a girlfriend, then?” John asks another evening as they are sitting at the table. He doesn’t know why he asks it, it’s not really any of his business and it’s a bit personal for a conversation between a teacher and his student. But the question had just sort of come out on its own.

Sherlock seems slightly taken aback by the query as well. He stares at John with something akin to mild surprise for a second before answering, “Girlfriend? No. Not really my area.” He sounds uninterested and slightly disgusted by the very idea.

“Oh, right,” John says uncomfortably, calling himself an idiot. What a completely bigoted question to ask in this day and age. He should have known better. He, of all people, knows what it’s like to have his sexual preferences assumed—just because he’s married doesn’t mean he’s straight. He hopes that Sherlock isn’t offended by his question, but he knows how some of these teens nowadays like to think they are radical activists and martyrs or some such nonsense. “Do
you…have a boyfriend, then?” he asks in a lame attempt to cover his tracks. “Which is fine, by the way,” he says in a rush.

Sherlock gives him a curious look from across the table, something that John can’t put a name to. It seems to be a strange mixture of confusion and wariness but also interest and pleasure, as if he is intrigued and flattered by the question at the same time. “I know it’s fine,” he tells John, cautiously.

They stare at each other awkwardly from across the sudden stillness that surrounds the table. There is a growing uncomfortable tension that seems to be descending on them quickly and John tries hard to counteract it.

“So you’ve got a boyfriend, then—?” he starts to ask, but Sherlock speaks before he can even finish his question.

“No,” the boy answers quickly, succinctly. He is still staring at John with that strange, unreadable look and his unblinking gaze is unsettling in both its intensity and colour. And he can’t be sure but John thinks there is a shameless smile curling the corners of Sherlock’s lips, as if he is enjoying the way that John has begun to fidget.

“Right,” John says awkwardly, clearing his throat and licking his lips. He glances down at his cup of tea just so that he doesn’t have to keep looking at the brunet. “Okay. So you’re unattached. Right. Good.”

He clears his throat again and looks off across the coffee shop, pretending to read the chalkboard menu that is hanging behind the counter.

“Mr. Watson, what happened to keeping things appropriate?”

At that, John whips his head back around to Sherlock to see the other male grinning at him slyly, an evil, amused gleam in his eye. The little tosser, John thinks. He’s enjoying this!

John flushes deeply at Sherlock’s implication and chokes a bit on his own spit. That is exactly the last thing he needs—someone thinking that he is trying to chase after a teenager half his age. A student of his, no less. People have gone to jail for years because of such things.

“No,” he asserts firmly, extremely flustered. “I’m not saying—no.” He shakes his head to drive his point home but also to clear his suddenly panicky and jumbled thoughts. “I’m just saying, it’s all fine.”

He stares at the boy when he is done speaking so that Sherlock can look in his face and see that there is no other intent there. He wants to be sure to make this very clear but he doesn’t really know what else to say—he never thought that he would have to explain that he is most definitely not trying to get a leg over with a teenage boy.

Across the table from him, the brunet can’t seem to contain himself any longer. Sherlock laughs jovially at John’s discomfort.

* 

“You did get shot, though,” Sherlock says suddenly on another occasion.

“Sorry?” John asks as he takes an indifferent sip of his tea, undaunted by Sherlock’s impudent statement.
“In Afghanistan,” Sherlock urges. “There was an actual wound?”

“Oh, yeah,” John answers nonchalantly. “In the shoulder.”

“Shoulder!” Sherlock crows triumphantly, as if he just found the missing piece to an intriguing puzzle. “I thought so.”

John gives him a skeptical look. “No you didn’t.”

“The left one,” Sherlock responds. It isn’t a question.

“Lucky guess,” John says with a smile.

Sherlock scowls at him from across the table. “I never guess,” he states petulantly.

John laughs at his tone. “Yes, you do,” he tells the boy.

Sherlock chooses to ignore him in lieu of something more important. “Can I see it?” he asks excitedly. He is almost bouncing up and down in his seat at the mere thought of being allowed to study John’s wound.

“Not a chance,” the older man responds without a second thought.

* * *

“What about kids?”

“Kids?” John repeats, at a loss.

“Yes. You’ve been with your wife for a long time,” Sherlock says, as if it is all obvious. “I find it surprising that you don’t have any.”

John fidgets in the shoddy little seat at the corner table uncomfortably, his knee knocking into his cane where it is propped against the chair. This isn’t a conversation he wants to be having with anyone, much less a student of his. Jesus, not even Mike asks him such personal questions, and they’ve been mates for years. But here is Sherlock—young and brash and constantly thirsty for knowledge—and John has never been very good at not answering his probing, invasive questions. “Well…” he begins uncomfortably but Sherlock cuts him off with a small sound of surprise.

“Oh,” he says, and the look on his young, open face seems to imply that something has just clicked in that vast brain of his. “You can’t.”

John says nothing, but his silence is answer enough.

“She can,” Sherlock continues as if it isn’t important that he is laying John’s life, his most intimate secrets, out on the table; as if it isn’t important that he is speaking about those things as if they are nothing of significance. Just another simple piece of information about the man. “But there’s a problem with you. She resents you for it.”

John will never understand how Sherlock does that, but he is completely right again. John doesn’t need to tell the genius that, though—he already knows. So instead he explains, “She got pregnant once, a few years ago, but she—we—lost it. She blames me for the miscarriage, too. Seems like she blames me for everything lately.” He tries not to sound bitter but doesn’t think he succeeds much.

“That’s because she’s an insecure narcissist who can’t take responsibility for anything in her life;”
Sherlock answers, waving a flippant hand back and forth as if he is explaining away something of little consequence. “If you were to ask her, she would probably blame you for her cheating, too.”

“You know,” John says suddenly, frowning at the child sitting across from him, “I shouldn’t be letting you talk about my wife that way. In fact, I shouldn’t be talking to you about this stuff at all.”

Not for the first time John wonders what in the name of hell has come over him. What has Sherlock done to him that he can’t seem to keep anything from the kid? When he talks to Sherlock, the words come so easily, naturally. It doesn’t seem to matter that they are grown-up issues that a child Sherlock’s age shouldn’t be able to understand. John tells him anything that Sherlock can’t deduce on his own, and he never thinks twice about it as the words are coming out of his mouth.

“Maybe,” Sherlock agrees with him, a dismissive shrug rolling across his thin shoulders. “But you’re not going to tell me to stop, either.”

John just sighs because he knows it is true. “How did you get to be so insightful?” he asks with a warm smile.

Across the table from him, Sherlock stares at him in surprise, eyes wide and words gone for the moment. When he seems to have recovered, he tells John, “That’s not what people usually say to me at this point in a conversation.”

John’s smile grows because he can certainly believe that. “What do they usually say?” he asks, curious.

“Well, they either send me to the head teacher’s office or they punch me in the face.”

John thinks that Sherlock means it to be said with an air of amusement, but the older man doesn’t laugh. Instead he frowns and reaches a hand slowly across the table towards the boy. “Is that what happened here?” he asks as he softly touches Sherlock’s face, tracing the tips of his fingers along a fading bruise that runs across the teen’s sharp cheekbone.

Sherlock looks away from John uncomfortably, taking his plush bottom lip in between his teeth and biting on it nervously. “Yes,” he says.

John would ask him who did it but he knows that Sherlock will never tell him. In the beginning, he had tried to get the information out of Sherlock, but the boy had always waved him away from the topic, saying that it didn’t matter who it was. So instead he brings his hand back to his lap and says, “I’m sorry, Sherlock.”

That makes Sherlock glance back at him, frown furrowing the smooth, porcelain skin of his forehead. “What are you sorry for?” he asks, his look one of honest confusion.

It hurts John that Sherlock even has to ask that question.

“That people don’t understand you,” John tells him softly, his hands fiddle with his coffee cup, wanting to feel Sherlock’s soft skin again. He keeps them to himself, though. He shouldn’t have touched the boy in the first place. Stupid of him, really. “It’s a lonely thing, being different.”

Sherlock stares at him for a moment, calculatingly. He seems to choose his next words carefully. “It’s also a lonely thing being unloved,” he says softly, looking John straight in the eye.

John smiles because he can’t deny that. “Well, then, let’s be lonely together,” he tells the boy and
brings his cup to his mouth to take a drink just so he doesn’t have to look Sherlock in the eye as he says it.

“That sounds…nice,” Sherlock says cautiously but he smiles back at John nonetheless.

They sit there for a moment in a silence that John thinks should be uncomfortable and awkward but really isn’t. It is just heavy with things unsaid and he finds that he doesn’t like it any better than the other kind of silence, so he breaks it.

“What about you?” he asks suddenly, clearing his throat and licking his lips.

“What about me?” Sherlock asks.

“Kids,” John says, as if it should be obvious. “Do you like them?”

Sherlock scoffs. “I’m still a kid, according to you. What does it matter if I like them or not?”

John shrugs and takes another drink of his tea. “Just making conversation.”

“Teenagers are horrible, insipid, imbecilic, hormone-driven Neanderthals who think only about fornicating,” Sherlock answers him rather suddenly. John thought that he would have to prod the kid a bit more, but Sherlock seems more than willing to belittle his peers. “But children, I rather like.”

That surprises him. “Really?” he asks.

Sherlock smiles at him. “You seem shocked by that.”

“Well, I just didn’t think you would. You’re very,” John searches for the right word but can’t seem to find it, so instead he settles for, “withdrawn.”

If Sherlock takes offense to what John has said, he doesn’t show it. “Most children of a certain age group have an unquenchable thirst for knowledge and don’t know how to judge,” he says by way of explanation.

“So then did you have better luck making friends when you were younger than you do making them now?” John wants to know, curious.

Sherlock nods and fiddles with his coffee cup. “Yes, I did. Between the ages of four and six is when I had friends, before peer groups developed. After that every single one of my friends seemed to find a social group they fit into while I did not. No one wanted to be the only friend of the strange child, and so thus began my excommunication,” he jokes with a wry smile.

John frowns at him from across the table. He wants to tell Sherlock that that is a long time to be alone but he can’t really talk—he’s been alone for about as long himself. And besides, he guesses it doesn’t really matter now.

Sherlock’s not alone anymore.
All We Need is a Spark to Ignite

Chapter Notes

Warnings: Mentions of child neglect in this chapter!

Thanks to Writing Keeper for the beta, and to Indelible_Ink for the beta and Brit-pick. I think I might have, maybe, figured out Tumblr...maybe not...it's smarter than I am. And there's too many things to click on, which I don't like. But whatever, I just wanted to put up a couple of screenshots I took from the series for God's sake, because I thought they were a nice visual to go with the scenes I wrote! Hopefully I hyperlinked them correctly in the text so that anyone who doesn't want to be distracted by pictures while reading doesn't need to be. Thanks for reading!

John knows he is in trouble the night that he walks into the coffee shop and he sees Sherlock waiting for him at their usual table. He has a cup of John’s favorite tea already done up the way that the older man likes it—it’s perfect, actually—and a genuinely happy smile on his face.

This is starting to get out of hand now. Actually, it has been getting out of hand; he has just refused to recognise it before this moment.

He can’t ignore it any longer, though. They’ve been lucky so far—they’ve not seen anyone from the school and Mary has been surprising complacent about John’s “nights at the pub with Mike”—but John knows that their luck can’t last. Things are going to start going downhill soon and John can’t allow that. He has to step up and take responsibility and end these visits between them. He’s the adult here, after all.

Sherlock proudly presents John with his tea as the older man sits down warily in the chair across the table, eyeing the younger boy as Sherlock smiles widely at him.

“What?” John asks, suspicious now. “What is it? You haven’t drugged the tea, have you?”

“Don’t be ridiculous,” Sherlock says with a wave of his hand. “I can’t do that with the last drug still in your system. The results would be thrown off completely.”

For a second John’s eyes go wide because he is afraid that Sherlock isn’t joking. He thinks about how strange it is that he knows enough about the teen to believe that Sherlock might very well be telling the truth about drugging John—the mad genius has no compunctions, really. Sherlock just laughs at the look on his face though, the sound loud and bright. John feels himself answering it easily. He can’t seem to help it; there is something in Sherlock that rouses all of John’s dormant emotions. He hasn’t laughed this easily with Mary in years. He hasn’t shared the secrets he tells Sherlock with anyone in his life, even his closest, oldest friends. He hasn’t felt this alive around anyone in so long, and John’s mind boggles at the fact that someone so young, someone so small, could be such an all-consuming force in the world. Sherlock has a spark of life to him that seems almost as if it is ready to burn out of control, consuming anyone who stands too close. There is a frightening genius that teeters on the cusp of something great, if only the boy could have a little bit more time to grow into himself. John thinks Sherlock is an absolute wonder and marvels at his intelligence, his humour, his view of the world every single time the brunet opens his mouth.
“Christ, Sherlock,” he says as their laughter tapers off. “You’re a loon, you know that?”

Sherlock smiles at John almost proudly and then launches into a discussion of what poisons he would use if he were seriously interested in seeing the effects on John. That then turns into a conversation about how Sherlock would murder him, if he was so inclined. Poison would not be the weapon of choice, the man comes to find out. Apparently it would be strangulation, something more intimate, for John. It doesn’t bother John one bit that Sherlock speaks of these things because he knows with absolute certainty that the boy isn’t serious. He just has a vast amount of knowledge on dreadfully interesting things that he wants to share. And John will be damned if he doesn’t find it all just as dreadfully interesting as Sherlock does.

They pass the rest of the night this way, comfortable and easy. John has completely forgotten the incident when he first arrived, the gut-wrenching thought that he will have to stop these visits with Sherlock because they are becoming too familiar with one another, too...intimate, for lack of a better word. But as they are leaving Sherlock brings the whole thing crashing down on John once again, like a bucket of ice cold water being dumped over his head. All it takes are six little words out of the boy’s mouth and John is on the verge of a panic attack.

“Can I have your mobile number?” Sherlock asks him casually as they exit the coffee shop—too casually. As if he doesn’t understand just how wrong such a question is. John knows the kid might be a little naïve about certain social rules and regulations but Sherlock is not an idiot. Far from it. The boy has to know that this isn’t done.

They stare at one another for a long moment while John tries to formulate a proper response and Sherlock seems to take it as a challenge that he refuses to back down from. His chin is set and his brow is furrowed in concentration, as if he is trying to will John into acquiescing.

“And I don’t understand why Sherlock can’t comprehend that what they are doing isn’t normal, isn’t particularly right.

Sherlock, though, is not so easily discouraged. “But what if I get stuck walking home in another storm? Or I get hurt and no one else is around to help me?” he pesters, and his face is determined. “Come on, Mr. Watson, you wouldn’t want that on your conscience, would you?”

John takes a deep breath and a step away from the boy, who is suddenly standing very close to him. It doesn’t help. So John presses his lips into a thin line lest he say something he regrets and shakes his head. When he feels that he has control over his words again he says, “I can’t, Sherlock,” and it sounds almost as if he is begging the boy to let it go, to drop it, to give up.

Sherlock doesn’t, of course.

“I’ll give you mine,” he says, as if that will solve the whole issue.

John is surprised to find himself laughing at the ridiculousness of the child in front of him. “That doesn’t make it better,” John tells him.

“Please?” Sherlock persists, and John doesn’t think he’s ever seen this particular look on Sherlock’s pale, handsome face—this look of sadness, of anxiety. It makes him look even younger than he already does. “It’s just that...I get so lonely sometimes and I have no one to talk to. No one else understands me the way that you do.”

And that’s the heart of it, right there. John knows that it’s true because he thinks he might feel the
same way about Sherlock, strange and wrong though it may be. There is no denying, though, that
the two get each other. And Sherlock has no one—that John has seen, at least—that he spends any
amount of time with at all. John knows how lonely that can get.

He’s lonely, too.

So he sighs, and before he knows what he is doing he is reaching out for Sherlock’s mobile. He
brings up the boy’s contact list (it is painfully short) and adds his name and number into it. He
doesn’t know how Sherlock does this to him; how Sherlock seems to break down all of his walls,
all of his barriers, all of his morals. John gives in to him so easily. He thinks that he should realise
by now that it’s pointless to fight the kid; Sherlock always wins.

“Use it only for emergencies or if you are absolutely bored to death with nothing else in the world
to do, do you understand me?” he tells Sherlock. The tone of his voice is harsher than his words,
but he needs Sherlock to understand. “This doesn’t change anything between us,” he stresses,
frowning at the boy as he passes back the mobile like he is angry at him but, really, he’s just angry
at himself—for giving in, for not being stronger, for needing something that he shouldn’t. “I’m not
your mate, Sherlock. Remember that. I’m your teacher.”

Thankfully, Sherlock doesn’t smile in triumph like John thought he would. Instead he simply
frowns down at his phone as he takes it back from John. “Then why are you doing it in the first
place?” he asks, long pale fingers softly caressing the touchscreen, over John’s new entry in his
contact list.

*I don’t have a single bloody idea*, John wants to say because it is the God’s honest truth. He
doesn’t want Sherlock to know that, though. “Because I worry about you, and I want to make sure
that you’re okay,” he says instead because that sounds safer. “Now remember: emergencies only.”

Apparently, everything is an emergency to Sherlock. He texts John constantly about the most
nonsensical things. John knows he should be mad at Sherlock for not listening to him again and
for not taking the man seriously. Secretly, though, John thinks it is all rather endearing, and
something ridiculous flutters in the deep recesses of his stomach whenever he looks down at his
mobile and sees that Sherlock has messaged him again.

Sherlock also takes John’s acquiescence of his mobile number as permission for him to dispense
with all formalities between them. He begins calling John by his first name in texts and when they
meet at the coffee shop. Thankfully he has kept to addressing John by his proper title while still on
school property so John lets it go. Sherlock wouldn’t listen to him if John asked him to stop,
anyways, and at least this way John can think that he is allowing Sherlock to get away with it.

Their meetings at the coffee shop quickly begin to grow longer, their conversations deeper
and more personal—the exact thing that John had tried to avoid in the past. Now, though, he finds
that he wants to know everything about Sherlock, all of it, and he can’t believe that he had ever
denied himself the chance to learn more about the boy.

“My father was a mechanic,” Sherlock tells him one night when John pesters him about his home
life. The teen has never said a single word about his family and John is indecently curious. “A
great one, once. A long time ago.”

This surprises John. He had thought Sherlock’s family would be more…well, more like him.
“What, like?” John flounders around for words a bit, unsure of what exactly to say, “He worked on
cars?”
Sherlock smirks. “Not exactly. More like he worked on missiles.” That makes infinitely more sense to John. “He was an engineer. One of the top specialists in the world. But like I said,” he goes on with a shrug of his thin shoulders and something that sounds like a sigh, “that was a long time ago, before the drinking. Now he just spends his days on benders down at his local. He’s bladdered most of the time.” Sherlock frowns and looks down at his coffee, not meeting John’s gaze. “Actually, I don’t think I can remember a time he hasn’t been completely pissed.”

“Oh,” John says, uncomfortable. He hadn’t really expected Sherlock to open up quite so much, and he is unsure of what to do with such personal information. He’s used to Sherlock knowing his deepest, darkest, most shameful secrets but he hadn’t ever expected to know any of Sherlock’s. He doesn’t know what to do with the information. “Wow, that’s, er…” he stumbles over his words and trails off pathetically.

“Yes,” Sherlock simply replies, as if John has said something different entirely.

“Well, what about your mum?” John asks quickly to try to cover up the uncomfortable silence that is threatening to fall quickly between them.

“My mum?”

“Yeah. What does she do?”

At that Sherlock shrugs again and still doesn’t look up to meet John’s eye. “I imagine she does whatever she wants,” he tells John, fiddling with the rim of his cup. “She certainly did ten years ago when she left us. If I remember correctly, I think she was a scientific researcher. Herpetology, maybe. I don’t know for sure, no one ever talks about her anymore.” He pauses and gets a far-off look on his face, as if he is thinking very hard about something. “I think she left on a scientific research expedition and told my father that she wasn’t coming back home afterwards. But I can’t really remember; it was so long ago,” he finishes with a shrug and a drink of his coffee.

John doesn’t know what to say. Out of everything that he expected to hear from Sherlock about the boy’s family, this most certainly isn’t it. At least now it makes more sense that no one was around for his birthday, that the clothes that he wears sometimes make him look like a waif, that he is stick-thin and smoking a pack of cigarettes a day at sixteen. The kid doesn’t really have anyone to take care of him. John doesn’t mean to say it because he knows Sherlock despises being pitied, but the words are out of his mouth before he can stop them.

“Oh, God, Sherlock. I’m…I’m sorry.”

At that, Sherlock finally looks up at him, his frown now one of confusion as he regards John from across the table. “Why?” he asks. “It’s not your fault that she left. You didn’t know her and you barely know me. Her leaving didn’t kill me, I’ve managed to survive. What do you have to be sorry about?”

It amazes John how Sherlock sees the world. All of that misery, yet he doesn’t dwell on it. He seems to realise there is nothing to be done about it and he accepts it, then he moves on. He doesn’t linger, doesn’t sulk. It is strange to see that behaviour in a teenager of his age. “I dunno,” John answers him with a helpless little shrug. “I guess it’s just one of those things that people say in situations like this. Societal norms and all.”

That catches Sherlock’s curiosity and the look that John is so used to seeing falls over his face again, the one he gets when he is soaking up new information. “Interesting,” he says. “I must remember that.”
John can’t help the small smile that grows on his lips as he regards Sherlock from across the wobbly table that they are sitting at. He wonders what it must have been like for the boy to grow up the way he has. What must it be like for Sherlock—constantly in desperate need of stimuli and information and knowledge and attention—to live in a cold, lonely silence every day of his life when he goes home? The loneliness in Sherlock’s world must be crushing. When John thinks about the way that Sherlock sits at the back of his class and stays invisible, he suddenly realises that it is because that is what Sherlock is used to. He is used to not being seen, and John thinks about how that must be suffocating to someone like Sherlock. John wonders if Sherlock can even remember a time when he was touched by a caring, nurturing hand. He thinks about that as he stares at Sherlock while the boy fiddles with his coffee cup, curly head bent low: for a child to go without hugs or kisses or soothing words while he is growing up. It turns John’s stomach, the thought of such neglect. He understands now why Sherlock is always so surprised when John gives him something, when John goes out of his way to think about him. Sherlock has never experienced that kind of attention and John can tell by the way that Sherlock reacts to it that the boy believes he deserves every lack in his life.

Across from him, Sherlock shifts uncomfortably in his seat under John’s silent scrutiny and the man can see that he looks almost as if he is preparing to leave, unable to stand the pity John is certain Sherlock can feel coming off of him in waves. John doesn’t want that, though. So he just clears his throat and licks his lips, trying to bring his thoughts back from the morose turn they have taken.

“Any siblings?” he asks, pushing forward with the conversation. They’re already in it now; things have been said that can’t be taken back. Besides, Sherlock knows so much about John that he thinks it’s only fair that he knows about Sherlock as well, even if the information wrenches at his heart. Especially if it wrenches at his heart.

“Siblings?” Sherlock asks.

“Yeah.”

The brunet doesn’t say anything for a long while. In fact, he looks very much like he doesn’t want to talk about it. John thinks it strange that Sherlock will tell him about his alcoholic father and his absentee mother but when asked about his siblings Sherlock gets uncomfortable.


“Oh,” John says, because Sherlock looks like he is done talking about it. But there is something there and John can’t let it go. “How much older?”

“Mycroft is around your age,” Sherlock answers, and he turns on his phone to fiddle with some app or another and doesn’t look up at John.

“So I guess you’re not close?” John pushes.

When Sherlock realises that John isn’t going to let this go, he sighs heavily and glares at the screen of his phone. “My brother moved away when I was very young,” he explains without looking up. “I…don’t really know him. He has stayed away most of my life. I see him from time to time, but usually only when he is bailing me out of some sort of trouble. That’s the only time he ever comes around. He seems to see me as nothing but a nuisance and someone who is purposefully trying to single-handedly bring down his career.” Sherlock scowls down at his phone as if it is the brother that they are speaking of.

John can’t help the smile that comes to his face, hearing Sherlock complain about something that
John knows could very easily be true. Sherlock has no scruples. “Are you?” he asks because he
really wants to know. “Trying to bring down his career, I mean.”

At that Sherlock scoffs and throws his phone down onto the top of the table. It makes their cups
rattle. “Please,” he says, glaring at John. His voice is irritated and annoyed. “He is on his way to
running the British government. As if anything I could do would possibly stand in his way.” He
shakes his head and his dark curls brush along his forehead and his ears, looking almost black in
the dim light of the coffee shop. “He just likes to think that I enjoy making things hard for him.
Which I kind of do,” he amends with a smirk. “But he shouldn’t flatter himself—I don’t cause
trouble solely with him in mind.”

“So do you get into a lot of trouble often, then?” John can’t help but ask. Sherlock has made
mention of a few incidents in the past and John can figure as much. Sherlock is a non-conformist if
John has ever seen one, and he has heard whispers and rumours passing from teacher to teacher at
the school, but he hasn’t ever put much stock into it.

“Often enough for him to detest me,” is Sherlock’s vague answer. “Although, to be fair, I think it
wouldn’t take much for that to happen, anyways.” The teen pauses and looks at John for a long
moment, a deep stare that feels like it penetrates to John’s very core. He seems to decide
something because when he begins to speak again he looks away from John and his voice is small.

“I, ah…had a problem with drugs,” he confesses quietly and John is surprised, to say the least. The
boy sitting in front of him seems far too intelligent, far too young for something like that.
“Cocaine,” Sherlock clarifies. “It got very bad, very quickly. Before Mycroft stepped in and
placed me in a rehab facility, there were a few…incidents that had to be covered up or taken care
of. Nothing too major, I don’t know why he has to complain about it so much.” Sherlock pauses
again and John knows that look that crosses his face, has seen it only a handful of times on the boy
but there is no mistaking it. It is sadness.

“He can’t understand why I’m not more like him,” Sherlock continues, fiddling with the edge of
his coffee cup now and not looking at John. “Motivated, ambitious, driven, successful. By my age
he was in a better school, getting better marks, and he expects the same out of me. He thinks that
just because we are brothers then that must mean that we share similar experiences during
childhood. Therefore he feels that I should have the same drive as he does and that my raising
shouldn’t be the reason that I am not like him. If he could become successful, he believes that I
should, too.”

That’s the stupidest thing that John has ever heard in his life, and it angers him that the one person
who can be there for Sherlock in his life, isn’t. “Yes, but your father wasn’t a drunk when Mycroft
was a child and your mother was around to raise him,” he argues, furious.

Sherlock simply shrugs. “He doesn’t see how any of that factors in when someone is as intelligent
as we are. ‘Emotions have no bearing over how you make your life turn out,’ he states in a
pompous, snooty voice that has John smiling.

“God,” John says, for lack of anything better. “Your family sounds like they’re something else.”
He doesn’t say he’s sorry again because he knows that Sherlock will only ask him why.

Across the table from him, Sherlock gives him a knowing smile. “You don’t have to tell me,” he
agrees, and the two look at each other over their styrofoam cups for a moment before they both
laugh.

The conversation moves on to happier things.
For a long time, John is content. His relationship with Mary still isn’t good but the more time he is able to spend out of the house—around Sherlock—the better his moods are, and he doesn’t feel like spoiling his good days with a row. So the two dance around each other at home, making small talk whenever they are in the same room, and dinners are no longer a battleground—something John is immensely grateful for. So even though things aren’t sorted yet, John takes this all as a hopeful sign that they are headed that way.

One evening, on a night when he isn’t meant to meet up with Sherlock, Mary tells him over dinner that she ran into a doctor during lunch who owns her own clinic across town. She tells him that the two had hit it off right away, talking about Mary’s duties at the clinic she is currently working in and the patient load. Apparently the doctor had been impressed with Mary’s skill and had asked if Mary would be interested in a position with them. As she tells John all of this she lights up happily, saying that the pay is so much better, as are the hours, and that they are a specialty clinic—something that Mary has always been interested in.

“I gave her my number and she said that she would ring me once she discussed it with the other doctor who runs the clinic with her,” she tells John excitedly as they finish up with dinner. “They want to fill the position quickly, though, so I doubt they’ll give me another chance at this opportunity if I decide not to take it or I miss it.”

They carry their empty plates to the kitchen and he helps her wash up, listening quietly as she goes on about the job. After a while she pulls her hands out of the sink filled with warm, soapy water, and dries them.

“I need to use the loo, can you wipe off the table?” she asks and is gone before John can say anything.

He moves back into the dining room with a dish rag in one hand and his cane in the other, supporting his leg. Mary’s mobile is still lying on the tabletop, so John moves it over to wipe the wooden surface clean. While he is scrubbing he hears the sound of a phone going off and looks up to see that Mary’s mobile has lit up, an unlisted number ringing through.

John is surprised that the doctor would ring Mary so quickly after just meeting with her, and so late in the day, but he thinks that maybe they just made a quick decision and need her to start immediately. He decides to pick it up so that Mary doesn’t lose her chance at the position.

“Hello,” he says when he answers it and he is confused when he hears a male’s voice on the other end of the line. Hadn’t Mary said the doctor was a woman?

“Oh, hi there. I, er, was looking for Mary Watson.”

There is a sinking feeling in his gut that he knows all too well, one that matches the look he is sure is on his face. “Can I ask who this is?” He tries not to let his voice crack.

“Oh, of course!” the man replies. “My name is Marcus and I met Mary this morning while we were getting coffee. We got to talking and she said that she was new in town so I told her about some of the community events that are coming up. There was a class that she seemed interested in that I teach and we exchanged numbers so I could keep her up to date on the schedule.” The man laughs nervously over the line. “But then I realised that I had given her the wrong number, so I just wanted to ring and leave her the correct one.”

John is silent for so long on the other end of the line that the man over the mobile has to ask if he is
still there.

“Yeah, sorry, mate,” John says, but the words taste awful in his mouth. “Give me the number, will you?” His fingers are numb as he writes it down with a biro that he finds sitting on top of a pile of post at one end of their dinner table.

“Thanks,” the man says over the line, but his voice is uneasy now. “I’ll, uh… I’ll just wait for her to ring,” he finishes awkwardly, as if trying to tell John that he won’t phone again, in case this turns out to be what he thinks it is.

“Ta,” John says because he appreciates the respect, at least—from a complete fucking stranger, if not from his wife—and rings off. He spends a few long moments staring down at the piece of paper that has some bloke’s number that he took down for his wife, and he doesn’t really recognise his own writing. It looks jagged and pointy.

When Mary wanders back into the room John can only look up at her, his face blank but his insides roiling uncomfortably.

She notices him staring and turns to him with a little smile. “What?” she asks unknowingly.

“Your mobile rang,” John says simply, calmly. He purses his lips and raises his chin. “I answered it.”

“John!” Mary exclaims, and she has the audacity to look affronted. “Why would you do that?”

“Because I thought it would be the doctor that you told me about, the one with the job offer. But instead it was some ruddy bloke named Marcus. Who the fuck is Marcus, Mary?”

“You had no right to answer my phone, John!” Mary yells at him, looking furious now. There are twin spots of dark colour high on her cheeks and her blue eyes are slits as she glares at him. “You promised you would stop doing stuff like that!”

“Well, apparently I can’t, can I? Because the minute I do you’re off giving your number out to ex-lovers and strangers you meet in queues for coffee!”

“It’s not like that!” Mary argues. “He is part of a class I was thinking about taking, something that will get me out of the house and meeting people that I can make friends with.”

John barks a course laugh. “Really, Mary? Because you have to admit that it seems a little suspicious, doesn’t it?”

“Oh my God, John, you have become so paranoid!” Mary shouts, exasperated. “Am I not even going to be allowed to have friends, now? Is that what you want? To keep me here, in this house all day long, only going out for work, while you’re off with Mike to the pub every night of the week?”

“I’m not off every night of the week,” John feels the need to clarify, as if that is the priority in their conversation, but Mary doesn’t even listen to him.

“You sound crazy, getting suspicious over every little thing that you think that you find on me!” Her hands are fluttering about frantically now, unable to stay still. “He teaches a yoga class and he didn’t have any business cards. He was there with his assistant and they were discussing their next class schedule! I don’t know what else to tell you to get it through your thick skull that you are acting absolutely mad!”
John stares at her for a moment, breathing deeply to try to calm himself. A part of him wants to believe her—trust her—wants to so very badly. He has been made a fool of enough in the past to know that Mary lies as easily as she breathes, though, and he reminds himself that he can’t trust her for a second.

She is right about one thing, though. He replays their conversation over in his head, hears her very solid—if possibly untruthful—argument and he knows that he is acting paranoid. He wonders when it was that he started seeing every man in the world as someone his wife would leave him for, and he finds that he is slightly disgusted with himself.

He never used to be this way. He had been so self-assured once, so confident. Now, he finds out a man is ringing up his wife to give her a schedule for a yoga class and he automatically thinks that they are fucking. He doesn’t want to live his life this way. He is tired. So very tired.

So he just nods his head, giving her one last look. She is staring at him from across the room, watching him to see what his next move will be.

He surprises them both.

“His number is on here,” he tells her, tossing the paper onto the table. “I’m going to the pub.”

Once he is in his car he pulls out his mobile and shoots off a text with steady hands and a guilt-free conscience. He could definitely use a drink at the moment, but he thinks there’s something else in his life now that might be just as helpful.

Sent: Know we don’t usually meet tonight but can you come to the coffee shop. I need someone to talk to.
Feeding the Flame

Chapter Notes

Thanks to Writing Keeper for the beta, and Indelible_Ink for the beta and Brit-pick. Also a huge thanks to a_solitary_cyclist for creating a wonderful, beautiful piece of fanart to go along with this story, which you can find a link to at the end of this fic! I also have another piece of fanart done by a good friend, SomeCoolName, which is waiting to go along with a future chapter. You people are truly amazing and so kind to do something like this for me. I appreciate it greatly. Thank you so much for reading, and for the support!

He wonders when it happened. When his first instinct the moment that he needs a friend, the moment that he needs someone to talk to, is no longer to call Mike but to text Sherlock. They have been growing steadily closer to one another, he knows. Their conversations have turned from simply academic subjects to deeply personal topics. Sherlock knows more about John than John thinks anyone in his life ever has, barring Mary, and the man feels like the same might be true for him of Sherlock’s life.

It would be worrying to think about, if he were to dwell on it. So he doesn’t.

There is no need for him to even explain the situation to Sherlock when the teen gets to the coffee shop. Sherlock can read it all on the tense lines of John’s body and the weary look on his face.

“You had another row with your wife.” It isn’t a question. Sherlock settles into his usual seat after stopping by the counter to order his coffee. “About a man. She gave him her number and he contacted her.”

For a second John forgets to be angry and just marvels at the genius in front of him. “How do you do that?” he can’t help but ask with a small chuckle and a shake of his head.

Sherlock shrugs, as if it is nothing special. “It’s mostly obvious: we don’t usually meet on Wednesday nights so you were probably at home, getting ready to grade the exams you passed out in class today,” he explains and, as always, John is enraptured by his deductions. “Since you had plans to stay in, the only thing that would make you leave is a row with your wife. The next bit is obvious, of course.”

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“He’s not being gentle with it, as if you blame it somehow for the argument. But you also haven’t thrown it against a wall, so the chances are good that it wasn’t your mobile in particular that is the focus of your anger. Her phone, then. So you had a row with your wife about her infidelity, it has something to do with a mobile, and you have said once before that she has
already given her number to one of her ex-lovers back in London. It’s an easy conclusion from there.”

John huffs out a laugh. “You’re too keen for your own good, you know that?” he says with a fond smile.

Sherlock smiles back at him for a moment before asking, “So what did you do?”

“How about what?”

Sherlock rolls his eyes. John knows he finds it particularly annoying when John is being dense. “About the man who contacted her.”

“Oh,” John says as he fidgets in his seat uncomfortably and tries not to blush. “Well, I gave her his number,” he mumbles and he knows how much of a pushover he sounds, even to his own ears. Sherlock simply stares at him in astonishment, as if amazed that so much stupidity could be housed in one body, and John feels the urgent need to defend himself. “I didn’t want to seem paranoid! That would have just proved her right, and I’ll be damned if I’m going to let that happen!”

“You gave her his number?” Sherlock asks him and his voice is calm, as if he were talking to a child. He gives John a hard, penetrating stare. “You gave your adulterous wife the number of some random bloke she met on the street?” John winces at the way it sounds coming out of Sherlock’s mouth, but he doesn’t have the chance to respond before the boy is shouting out, “Why would you do that—he clearly wants to fuck her! You just gave your wife the number of a man that she is eventually going to cheat on you with!”

“You don’t know that! And keep your voice down!” John responds, taking his own advice and lowering his voice, looking around to see if there is anyone in the coffee shop. It is almost completely empty, though. “Besides, she said that he ran some sort of yoga class or something and he just needed to give her the class schedule.”

“John,” Sherlock says, a pained expression on his face and his eyes closed, as if he can’t even stand to look at the man. “If he ran a class and wanted to simply give her a schedule, he would have given her the address of his website—anyone who does anything has a website nowadays—or at the very least emailed the schedule to her. There is no need for something as personal as a mobile number to be exchanged.” He pauses and opens his eyes to look at John again, and there is a strange sort of pity in his odd coloured stare. “You really are an idiot,” he tells John sadly.

The man makes an injured sound at Sherlock from across the table.

“Oh, don’t be like that,” Sherlock says with an impatient wave of his hand. “Practically everyone is.”

John doesn’t argue with him because he knows, deep down, that Sherlock is right. Sherlock is always right, after all. “Bugger, I am, aren’t I?” John asks, and he suddenly wishes that he could sink into his tea cup.

Sherlock, thankfully, says nothing.

* 

The next time they meet up, on a regularly scheduled day, Sherlock walks into the coffee shop sporting a spectacular black eye and a fat lip.

“One of the boys from the rugby team didn’t appreciate that I told him that his girlfriend was cheating on him with his older brother,” Sherlock replies simply, as if it is nothing. “Apparently it was my fault and he took it out on me accordingly.”

“Christ, your eye,” John says through clenched teeth, reaching out to brush his fingers softly over the already purple flesh of the bottom lid. “That’s going to swell. Come on, I’ve got a cold pack in the first aid kit in my car.” He stands from their table and pulls Sherlock along behind him by the wrist as he limps out of the shop on his cane. He leads Sherlock to the boot of his car and unlocks it with his key. He breaks open an ice pack, the kind filled with gel that can be stored easily, and hands it to the boy so Sherlock can place it on the side of his face. Then he gets to work putting ointment on some of the scratches along Sherlock’s skin and the angry-looking split along his bottom lip. John puts plasters on anything that looks like it needs it and then tidies everything away into the kit once more.

When he is done he turns to look at Sherlock, standing beside him in the dark, looking small and dejected with the ice pack held tightly to his face. John sighs. “Do you ever think that maybe you should just keep your deductions to yourself?” he asks, and he can’t help bringing a hand up to brush an errant curl away from Sherlock’s forehead, where it has gotten stuck to some of the ointment John rubbed into a cut above his thick eyebrow.

Sherlock gives him a blank stare, as if confused by John’s question. “No,” he states plainly. “Why would I? These people are stupid and senseless enough as it is; they don’t need to hide behind ignorance as well. I feel that I’m providing a public service. They should be thanking me for enlightening them to all of their faults.”

John can’t help but laugh at that, some of the constant worry he has for Sherlock draining away now that the boy is in front of him, safe for the time being. “Even if it means you’ll keep getting beat up?” he asks with a smile.

“Seeing the truth requires sacrifice, John,” Sherlock says and his tone is quite serious. “I won’t be someone I’m not just because it will hurt a little less.”

*  

“Again, Sherlock?” John says with an exasperated sigh the next time they meet at the coffee shop. “What happened this time?”

“The Thompson twins didn’t like the fact that I exposed them cheating on a final so they decided to teach me a lesson.”

“The Thompson twins are the head teacher’s kids!” John says, outraged. “Did they get in trouble?”

Sherlock just rolls his eyes and takes a drink of his coffee, but he has to drink it out of one side of his mouth because the other is sporting a large gash along the top lip so he looks rather ridiculous doing it. “It’s all politics, even in secondary school,” he tells John. “It’s all about who you know. I’ve been suspended for two days.”

If John was mad before, he is livid now. “That’s a load of bollocks!” he shouts, not caring who hears him.

Sherlock just smiles at him. “I didn’t know you cared so much, John.”
John ignores the attempt to distract him from the issue at hand. “Sherlock, it’s unfair, plain and simple,” he tells the younger male, voice hard and brow furrowed. “They shouldn’t be treating you like this. How can you stand it?”

“It’s quite all right, I assure you,” Sherlock comforts him, trying to take another drink of his coffee and failing miserably before giving it up as a bad job. He frowns down at the cup as if it is the coffee’s fault. “I’m rather used to it by now. Besides, all of these bruises make for more interesting conversation, anyways.”

“That doesn’t make it any better, Sherlock,” John says with a long suffering sigh. “Come on, let’s get you patched up. Do you know: I’ve had to restock my first aid kit twice since I’ve started having coffee with you? I’m going to have to buy cold packs in bulk.” He leads Sherlock out of the coffee shop yet another time and towards the boot of his car where he props his cane up and starts the ritual of taking everything he needs out of the kit. It’s all so familiar now that Sherlock simply stands there and waits patiently to be cleaned up.

John works over him in silence for a while before he hears a whispered question, sincere in its confusion.

“Why do you keep helping me, John?”

John pauses in his ministrations and stares at the boy standing next to him. Sherlock is almost the same height as him, tall for his age, but there is still a lot of time for him to grow. His strange eyes shine brightly in the darkness of the street. John doesn’t exactly know how to answer him so the blond says simply, “Because you need it, Sherlock.”

“You don’t think that I bring this all on myself so I should just deal with the consequences and leave you alone?” Sherlock asks him, and it hurts John’s heart to know that the question is asked in complete seriousness.

“Christ, no!” John exclaims. “What kind of doctor—or person—would I be if I thought that?”

Sherlock simply stares at him before answering, quite plainly, “You would be just like everyone else.”

John’s lips set into a hard line at this response and his brow furrows harder. He brings his hands back up to continue working on Sherlock’s cuts and scrapes. “Well, then I guess I’m not like everyone else,” he says quietly as he tends to his student. “I’m not going to abandon you just because you won’t stop deducing people and getting them angry at you. That’s who you are, Sherlock, and it’s great. You don’t ever have to change for people.”

Sherlock stares at him, eyes wide and expression so open, vulnerable. He looks young, John thinks. Younger than he seems. But John has to remind himself that he is young, that he acts older than he is, and it shows in the child-like sadness that shines through Sherlock’s eyes in the dim glow of the dome light in John’s car and the streetlamp above them.

“You understand me, John,” he says and his voice is a soft whisper, small in the darkness. “No one has ever understood me like you do. No one has ever tried to.”

* *

It is bitterly cold one morning when John leaves for work, and as he sits shivering in his junky little car, the heat doing nothing at all to warm him, he thinks about how nice it would be to have a
good, strong cup of coffee from the shop. So he stops in on his way to the school and limps inside, the cold aggravating his leg. At the counter he orders a regular for himself and then decides on a double espresso as well, smiling to himself in a satisfied sort of way.

When he gets to the school, he immediately heads for the rugby field, where he knows Sherlock will be lurking, sucking on his usual morning cigarette. John has seen him from across the field many times over the months that he has worked at the school.

Just as he suspects, Sherlock is beneath the stacked, rickety wooden seats by the field, his skinny arms wrapped around himself as he huddles into his too-thin jacket. John makes his way across the pitch, the frosted grass crunching beneath his feet and his aluminium crutch. It is hard to hobble along with two styrofoam cups in one hand, a cane in the other and a stiff leg that is twinging from the cold, but he manages. When he reaches Sherlock he sees that there is a large, warm looking scarf that is tied around his neck, a deep navy colour, and it brings out the hint of cornflower blue in his eyes, making them less green today.

“Here,” John says with a smile. He knows that he has startled the youth because John has never sought Sherlock out at school for anything before. He has made it a rather known point to stay away from him, actually. “I brought you a coffee.” He holds it out to Sherlock, who eyes it warily, not reaching out to take it.

“Why would I want that?” he asks John, in all seriousness. He is staring at the styrofoam cup as if it is offensive, and John tries hard to not let his confusion show and to seem unaffected by Sherlock’s rather cold tone.

“Well, I just figured that you liked to drink it, since you always order a coffee at the shop,” he says with a dismissive shrug.

“I only drink it at night,” Sherlock informs him with a derisive sniff. At least, it would be derisive if it wasn’t so wet sounding. The cold seems to be getting the better of the thin boy.

That gives John pause. “You only drink coffee at night,” he clarifies. It is not the first time he is confused by the student’s quirks and he knows it won’t be the last but this one is still rather ridiculous-sounding. “Caffeinated coffee,” he repeats, as if that will make it make more sense. It does not. “Right, of course. How stupid of me to think you would want it in the morning. So, should I just bin it then…?” he moves to throw it away in one of the large, rusty metal rubbish receptacles by the edge of the stands.

At this, Sherlock makes a move towards him, finally. “No, I’ll take it,” he says as he holds out his hand for it.

John stares at him with a surprised look at the sudden change of heart.

“You did go through all that trouble to bring it to me,” Sherlock explains, reaching out to take the cup from John’s hand with a smile. Their fingers brush and John can feel how cold Sherlock’s bare skin is even through the extra layer of John’s leather glove. “Ta.”

“You’re a little bit strange, you know that?” John asks, at a loss. Sometimes Sherlock’s moods can give him whiplash.

The smile grows wider. “So I’ve been told.”
Inside Your Burning Light, I Might Just be All Right

Chapter Notes

*** Warnings: Descriptive mention of child abuse, though it is only the aftermath of the situation that I write about. If this concerns you and you are unsure whether you would be okay reading, and would like some more info on the scene, you can drop me a comment and I will explain it more in-depth.

Thanks to Writing Keeper for the beta, and Indelible_Ink for the beta and the Britpick. I should probably have mentioned that any mistakes in the story are my own, because I can't leave well enough alone.

The shrill sound of his mobile going off jerks him awake, making him jump. He opens his eyes but there isn't really a change in the darkness. It must still be the middle of the night. The mobile continues to blare incessantly and beside him Mary is stirring, grumbling at him to shut the damn thing off. Once he is slightly more awake he reaches for the phone quickly. It is never good news when someone rings him in the middle of the night and his first thought is of Harry, or Mike, or—

Sherlock?

The name glares up at him from the ID screen, the light almost blinding in the darkness of his bedroom. John frowns and gets out of bed, answering it as he leaves the room and stumbles down the hallway on his aching leg, not wanting to wake Mary.

“Sherlock?” he asks in lieu of a greeting. The boy doesn’t ring him. Ever. He prefers to text; John knows this. Something has to be wrong for Sherlock to be phoning him. “What's happened?”

For a moment only silence comes through the other end of the line. And then, softly, “John?”

He sounds small, scared. Unlike himself. John’s heart beats faster and his stomach clenches in fear.

“What’s wrong? Are you okay?”

“John? Can you meet me?”

What the hell is going on, John wonders, but out loud he responds, “Sherlock, it’s the middle of the night. I can’t meet you. Why did you phone me?”

“Please. I need you to meet me. I…need your help.”

“What’s wrong, Sherlock?” he repeats, and he can hear a hysterical note beginning to creep into his voice. “Are you hurt?”

“Come to the coffee shop. I'll be waiting outside.”

The line dies.

Bugger. Whatever this is, it can’t be good. John stumbles his way back to his bedroom and turns
on the light to the en suite. He knows Mary will wake but there is really nothing for it. In the halflight he gets dressed quickly, not wanting to waste a moment. From across the room he hears Mary stir.

“John?” she asks sleepily, voice groggy. “What are you doing? Did someone ring?”

“It’s one of my students, Mary,” he tells her, because he won’t be able to lie about where he’s going at this time of night—it’s too dangerous. “I think something’s wrong. I need to go check on him.”

“Your student?” she asks as she struggles to sit up in bed, and he knows that she isn’t fully awake yet because she isn’t getting angry at him. But he can tell by her voice that she is heading that way. “John, why are your students ringing you? They shouldn’t be doing that.” And, as he predicted, she is fully awake now, sitting up and glaring at him from beneath bed-mussed, short blonde hair.

But John doesn’t pause as he pulls on the clothes he had been wearing earlier that day, wrinkled and rumpled from being shoved into the hamper. “I gave him my number in case something like this happened,” he says as he searches frantically for his shoes. “I knew it would, sooner or later. He…has problems. I knew eventually he would need help.” He ignores the look Mary is giving him as he searches the room for his jacket, too.

“But, John, you can’t just go to see him in the middle of the night!” Mary tells him incredulously. “Won’t you get in trouble for something like that?”

He finds his coat on the seat of Mary’s vanity stool and beneath it are his shoes. He hurriedly puts them on as he says to her, “I don’t care. If he’s hurt, I’d never forgive myself for not helping him.” He knows she is worried, though, so he reassures her. “I won’t do anything stupid, I promise. I know you don’t want me to do this, but you’re not going to talk me out of it.” He is completely dressed now and is worried he has already wasted too much time. “I have to go; I don’t want to take too long getting to him. I’m sorry,” he tells her as he leaves the room and all but stumbles down the stairs.

“John!” he hears her call after him. He ignores her, racing out of the house and into his car instead, not even bothering to remember his cane.

*

He pulls up to the kerb right in front of the coffee shop, dark now so long after closing. He almost doesn’t even see Sherlock. The boy is sitting on the pavement, back leaning against the building and knees drawn up to his chest. He is curled into himself so tightly that John almost misses him in the deep shadows from the half-moonlight.

He throws the car into park and doesn’t even bother turning it off as he jumps out, running over to the teen and dropping to the ground next to him. He reaches out to lift Sherlock’s head away from where he has it tucked against his knees and stops short.

“What the hell happened?!” John shouts, forgetting himself for a moment.
Sherlock flinches at the loud sound of John’s voice and tries to pull away from him. “I…It doesn’t matter.”

“Like hell!” John yells and then realises that he is only scaring the boy more, so he lowers his voice. “Come on, get up. Let’s get back to the car so I can see in the light. The first aid kit has a torch in it.”

John helps Sherlock up and confirms that the bruising isn’t just concentrated on his face. The brunet winces and draws in a sharp breath at the pain of being moved. As John half drags him to the car, he notices Sherlock wrapping an arm around his stomach and he seems to be favouring his left leg slightly. John takes him to the passenger side door and sits him carefully in the seat. The interior light of the car isn’t enough to get a proper look at his face so John moves to go to the boot, where he keeps the kit with the torch.

When he steps away, Sherlock’s hand shoots out and grabs at his sleeve, clutching it tightly. He makes a noise that sounds suspiciously like a whine, and when John looks at him his pale-coloured eyes are wide with fear.

“It’s okay; I’m just going to the boot for the first aid kit,” he soothes the youth, voice soft and low. “I’ll be right here. I’m not going anywhere. I promise.”

He feels Sherlock’s grip reluctantly relax. He hurries to the boot and grabs up the whole kit, moving back to Sherlock. John doesn’t want to leave him any more than Sherlock wants to be left. He sets the kit on the roof of the car and opens it, grabbing the small, pocket-sized torch, and then bends down to shine it over Sherlock.

The blood and bruising look even worse in the bright artificial light of the beam, and John's face crumples in concern.

“What happened, Sherlock? Who did this to you?” John asks before putting the end of the torch into his mouth so that he can use both hands to hold the sides of Sherlock’s face and gently press over the bones, checking for fractures.

“I’ve told you before, John,” Sherlock says, wincing as John’s thumb presses softly against his right cheekbone. “I don’t exactly have a lot of friends.”

John pulls his hands away from Sherlock’s face and grabs the torch so that he can talk again. “It’s one in the morning, Sherlock. Are you really going to sit there and feed me some bullshit story about school bullies doing this to you? I thought you were meant to be a genius. What makes you think I would believe that for a minute?” He puts the torch back in his mouth and moves his focus onto Sherlock’s arms. “This wasn’t a bully,” he mumbles around the penlight. The words are slightly impeded but he knows Sherlock can understand him. “Do you want to tell me what really happened?”

Done with Sherlock’s arms and satisfied that there are no breaks serious enough to make transporting him in the car difficult, John moves on to the teen’s torso. He reaches out to lift Sherlock’s shirt up and for the first time that night Sherlock tries to pull away from John, weakly pushing the doctor’s hands away.

“No, don’t—”

But John carefully forces Sherlock’s hands back and pulls the loose shirt up anyways.

“Fuck,” John curses, the torch falling to the ground with a clatter as John’s mouth falls open.
Sherlock’s torso looks even worse than his face does. There are mottled patches of disturbing colours along his ribs and the soft flesh of his belly. Some of the bruises look older, a disturbing sickly greenish-yellow colour that stands out among the fresh red and purple marks. There is hardly a spot on the kid’s body that isn’t covered in discolouration.

“Sherlock, we have to go to hospital,” John tells him as he pulls the shirt back down carefully and starts lifting Sherlock’s long legs into the car, pushing Sherlock gently to get him to sit back in the seat.

“No, John!” the brunet exclaims suddenly, and that fearful look is back in his eyes. “I rang you because I wanted you to take care of it. I don’t want to go to hospital! I can’t!”

“You need x-rays done to see if anything is fractured or broken,” John tells him, his voice full of a softness and patience that he does not feel. But he is a doctor at the moment and Sherlock is his patient, scared and young. John does his best to stay calm and rational for Sherlock’s sake.

“No, it’s fine, I swear,” the boy says with a shake of his head, but he winces and sucks in a sharp breath as his skin pulls along his face at the movement. “Just clean up the cuts and scrapes and give me some cold packs.”

“Sherlock, I’m not going to clean you up,” John tells him, voice calm and even. He wants Sherlock to understand. “We’re going to hospital, and they are going to document every single bruise on your body and drop of blood on your face. You’ll need the evidence for when you file charges on whoever did this to you.” He shuts Sherlock into the car and runs around to the other side, slipping into the driver’s seat and putting the car in drive.

“John, I’m not going to do that!” Sherlock cries out as the man starts to drive away from the kerb. “Please, don’t take me there. I don’t want to go.” He sounds almost as if he is about to cry, and it breaks John’s heart to hear his voice crack that way.

He doesn’t look over at the boy because he is afraid that if he does he will lose his composure, so instead John stares ahead at the road as he says, “You don’t have to tell me what happened if you don’t want to. If you want to talk to the doctors or a social worker about it at hospital, I can step out of the room if it will make you feel more comfortable—”

“No, I won’t want you to leave me,” Sherlock interrupts him but John forges on.

“—But we are going to get you checked over. Full stop.” His tone brooks no argument. It is hard and harsh, and the sound of it is something he hasn’t heard since his military days and it surprises even him.

Sherlock stops arguing and a tense silence falls between them, not lifting until they reach the A&E admittance entrance. John finds an empty parking spot and shuts off the car, opening his door. “Don’t move, I’ll go around to help you out.”

He supports Sherlock’s weight as they limp into the A&E. He carefully wraps a hand under Sherlock’s armpit so that the boy can throw his own lanky arm over John’s shoulders and put his weight on the older man. As they hobble into the building John looks over at his student worryingly. Sherlock’s face is so close to his own in their current position and for the first time John gets a good look at Sherlock’s injuries under glaringly bright lights.

He urges them on to the admittance desk as fast as Sherlock can go.

*
“Are you his father?” an older, severe-looking doctor asks John as Sherlock sits on the bed in the A&E exam room, looking very much like he is trying hard to huddle into himself and disappear.

“No,” John says, trying not to be offended that someone would think that he could be responsible for letting something like this happen to a child. He knows they are just standard questions. “I’m his—” he is about to say teacher but thinks that might invite some follow-up questions, so he finishes with “friend”, instead. Even that, though, gets him a raised eyebrow so he clarifies, “A friend of the family.”

“And where is his guardian?” the doctor asks, opening a manila folder that must be Sherlock’s chart and staring down at it, a frown crossing over his wrinkled face.

“I’m nearly an adult, I don’t need a guardian,” Sherlock speaks up for the first time, interrupting them crossly.

“I see,” the doctor says, glancing back up at the younger man. “So, these injuries…would you like to explain how they came about?”

Sherlock glares at him as best he can out of one good eye. “No, I would not,” he says simply.

“Sherlock,” John interrupts, wanting to reassure his student. “I’ll step outside if that will—”

“You’re not going anywhere,” Sherlock tells him matter-of-factly. His tone is deadly serious and John doesn’t try to fight him. He doesn’t really want to leave the boy anyways. “You’re staying right here with me. And I don’t have anything else to say so would you kindly just get on with it?” The last part is directed towards the doctor.

“All right,” the older gentleman says, looking to John for some sort of verification. John only shrugs, unsure of what else to do.

The doctor cleans Sherlock up methodically, wiping up blood to expose the lacerations underneath. Sherlock’s bottom lip is split rather badly but nothing that will require stitches. His nose has long since stopped bleeding so the doctor needs only to wipe it clean and flush it. Once the man has washed and bandaged all of the scrapes Sherlock is taken to get x-rays of his face, arms, torso and legs. He holds tight to John the entire time he is cleaned up and as he is taken to the x-ray room, only letting go when the technician operating the machine makes John leave so that they can complete the scan. But afterwards Sherlock clings to him again, and John can’t help hugging Sherlock back tightly, crushing the child to him as if that alone will protect Sherlock from whatever it is that has happened to him. When the nurses let them back into their examination room, the teen sits on the uncomfortable bed and John settles in next to him, wanting to stay close. Sherlock’s head falls to John’s shoulder and John’s arm wraps around his thin frame carefully.

“I meant what I said, Sherlock,” John tells him, voice a soft whisper in the small room. They are alone for the moment and John takes the opportunity to pull the brunet close to him, protectively. This is the first time he has been so close to Sherlock yet it feels comfortable, natural. “You don’t have to tell me what happened if you don’t want to. But I think I can make an educated guess.” He brings a hand up to Sherlock’s face to brush a wayward curl out of his eye, careful not to touch the swollen flesh. “I’ll still help you any way that I can—of course I will—but it would be nice to know for sure what kind of help I may need to provide for you.”

Sherlock presses his face into John’s neck for a moment and takes a few deep breaths. John waits patiently and doesn’t push him. When he speaks finally, the sound is muffled by John’s clothing and the words are whispered on a broken sob. “It was my father.”
John’s stomach plummets to his feet. “Is he the one who has been leaving all of the bruises and cuts I’ve seen to before?” he asks, because John has to know. John has to know how long Sherlock has been coming to him to get patched up from injuries his own father has left on him. John has to know how long he’s been so blind and stupid.

“Not all of them,” Sherlock says, voice small. His face is still hidden against John’s neck and John can feel Sherlock’s warm breath on the sensitive skin below his ear. He hugs the boy tighter to him. “I wasn’t lying when I told you that the kids from school like to bully me. I’ve never lied to you, John.” He sounds adamant that John realise this.

“I know, Sherlock. I know,” John reassures him, bringing a hand up to run it soothingly through the boy’s wild hair. “Why didn’t you want to report the abuse?”

He feels Sherlock’s head shake minutely against his neck. “It doesn’t matter,” the brunet says bitterly. “If I had reported it when I was younger I would have just been sent to live with Mycroft, and I couldn’t stand the thought of owing my brother anything. He wouldn’t have believed me anyways. He would have thought that I was just making up sensational lies to make his life harder. And now that I’m nearly an adult…” he pauses for a moment and John waits patiently for him to continue. “I’ll only be living there for a few more months. What does it matter? My father is gone half of the time anyways, off at a pub somewhere. I just have to keep out of his way the few times he is home. Tonight he came back steaming drunk. You’d think I would have learnt by now —”

John interrupts him because he doesn’t think that he can stomach what he knows Sherlock is about to say. “Sherlock, this is in no way your fault! Don’t you even think that for a moment! Just because your dad is completely pissed every day of his sodding life doesn’t give him the right to do this to you.” For the first time he lifts Sherlock away from him so that he can look the younger male in the face. Sherlock tries to avoid looking him in the eye but John uses a hand to lift his chin gently and makes the brunet face him. “Do you understand me?”

There is a pause but then Sherlock nods his head reluctantly. John brings him back down into another careful hug, and he can feel Sherlock go pliant against him.

As they sit in the examination room, waiting on the results from Sherlock’s x-rays, John thinks about the boy he is holding. He has always thought that Sherlock is so vibrant, so full of vitality. The brunet seems to take whatever life throws at him and just goes along with it. He isn’t resentful or bitter about the hand he has been dealt—the alcoholic and abusive father, the absentee mother, the intelligence that makes him different from anyone else, especially kids his own age. John has always found the way Sherlock views the world refreshing. He is ingenious and dynamic. Charmingly enigmatic and completely without shame. If the boy wants something then he simply asks for it, and he doesn’t understand that anything could ever be denied him. He has all the wonder and curiosity of a child and none of the disillusionment of an adult.

Or so John had thought once.

As Sherlock sits there on the flimsy hospital bed, face swollen and horrifically bruised black and blue, John finds that he has only seen a small part of Sherlock, the part that Sherlock has wanted him to see. But now the boy clings to him desperately and whispers to him brokenly.

“I’m tired, John. I’m just…tired. I don’t want to live this life anymore. It’s…tedious. It hurts. Why does life have to hurt so much?” Sherlock asks him, voice small.

John carefully hugs the thin teen tightly to him, a warmth stinging at the corners of his eyes. “I’m sorry, Sherlock. I’m so sorry. I wish I could fix it, make everything better for you. I would, if I
could. I would do it in a heartbeat, so that you wouldn’t ever have to hurt again.” He holds the brunet gently and covers Sherlock, trying to protect the boy from a hit that has already struck him.

Sherlock sighs softly against his neck and relaxes even further against him, and John knows in an instant that the child has fallen asleep against him, wrapped safely in the protective circle of John’s arms.

*

It takes a couple of hours for the results from the scans to come back. During that time, the boy sleeps soundly whenever he can as the nurses bustle in and out of the room, checking vitals and leaving again to tend to paperwork. He stays in the safety of John’s arms; he won’t be torn away from his teacher. Eventually, though, the scans come back and show no fractures or breaks, and the doctor comes in to tell John that Sherlock is able to be discharged.

When they are finally allowed to go, it is closer to the next morning than it is to the previous night and John knows that he is going to have to leave Sherlock on his own when he goes back home.

He is anxious as Sherlock prepares to leave and they walk through the hospital towards the exit. He helps Sherlock move along carefully, taking the brunet’s weight when he needs to and steadying Sherlock on his feet every once in a while, neither saying a word as they move slowly through the white-wash corridors until Sherlock breaks the silence.

“See,” he says suddenly, turning a haughty glance towards John even through the bruises. “I told you that the limp was psychosomatic.”

For the first time all night, John finally spares a moment to give his own body a once over: he is tired—inimensely so—and his left arm is trembling from where he has been holding Sherlock up every time the boy has had to walk somewhere, but there is nothing more than a dull ache in his shoulder, hardly worth thinking about. And further down his body…nothing. Not a twinge, not a spasm, not even so much as a cramp.

He marvels at it.

“And all it took was me getting beaten to show you,” Sherlock attempts to joke, but John doesn’t think it is overly funny.

He smiles, though, partly in amazement and partly in wonder at the genius walking next to him. “Shut up, you berk,” he says fondly with a shake of his head, and they continue down the corridor in silence once more.

Once they reach the exit of the hospital and step outside into the cold night air, though, the worry and anxiousness both hit John like a brick wall once more.

“Sherlock,” he begins as they head across the car park to John’s vehicle, “you can’t go back home right now. I’d let you…I mean, I’d want you—just so that I’d know that you’re safe——” he stammers, unsure of what he is saying, “but I can’t really take you home with me. Is there…is there somewhere that you can go? Just for a few days while your dad rides this one out?” He feels horrible saying this to Sherlock after he had promised the kid that he wouldn’t leave him but there is nothing else for it. He can’t simply sweep Sherlock away from his home and bring him over to his place. Mary was worried enough as it is, just from a ring in the middle of the night.

But, thankfully, Sherlock seems to understand and he doesn’t try to remind John that he had promised to stay with him. “Yes, John,” he answers, and the man is calmed by the fact that
Sherlock doesn’t have to sit there and think overly long of a place that he can go to. He must have someone—an extended family member or at least one friend—who won’t mind taking him in for a little while. Just while his father stumbles through this particular binge. “Don’t worry about me. I have somewhere I can go.” He tries to reassure John with a small smile, but it seems to hurt him to move his lips that way so he stops.

“You’re sure?” John asks, wanting to be positive. “I don’t want to leave you without a place to stay. I can get you a hotel room or something. Well—I can’t, really, but I would find a way, if you needed me to. It would be difficult but—”

He is stammering again and is somewhat relieved when Sherlock cuts him off. “John, it’s fine. Really,” the teen assures him. “I have somewhere to stay. You can go back home. Don’t worry about me.”

John scoffs. “Yeah, like that’s bloody likely.”

Sherlock smiles at that, even though it must hurt. “Go home to your wife, John. I’m sure she’s wondering where you are. I’ll be okay.” He pauses for a moment and just stares at John, something unfathomable in his eyes. “Thank you. For helping me. I don’t know what I would have done….”

“It’s fine,” John says. “Really, it’s okay. I’m more than happy to help, any time, no matter what you need. I want…I want to take care of you.”

Sherlock shuffles about on his feet awkwardly and his gaze wanders from John’s face. “I appreciate that, but I don’t need someone taking care of me all the time. Just knowing that I can ring you if I ever need to…it’s…comforting.” He picks at a loose thread on his thin jacket, avoiding John’s eyes. “I’ve never…no one has ever cared enough about me to want to help.”

The words break John’s heart into a million pieces, and he doesn’t know what to say to them so he says nothing.

“I’m…grateful to you,” Sherlock whispers brokenly, looking back at John through lowered lashes. “Immensely.”

John is afraid that if he opens his mouth something embarrassing, sentimental, and wholly inappropriate will come out, so instead he takes a deep breath and holds it until he thinks he can manage to talk and not say something unsuitable.

“I’ll…” the words stick in his mouth and he has to clear his throat before he can get them out again. “I’ll see you back at school in a week or two, Sherlock. If you need anything—anything at all—just ring me. Whatever it is, whatever the time, I’ll help you. Always.” And before he can think better of it, he quickly gets into his car and turns it on, pulling away and decidedly not glancing back at the tiny-looking teen in his rearview window.

He hates leaving Sherlock. It actually makes him physically ill to do it but he knows there is nothing else he can do for the younger male. During the ride back home he keeps looking down at his mobile, hoping for a ring or a text from Sherlock asking John to come back, for assistance with finding a place to stay. If John didn’t know any better he would say he is just hoping for a reason to bring Sherlock home with him.

However, his mobile stays disappointingly quiet the entire ride home. He climbs the stairs to his bedroom wearily but strangely—wondrously—pain-free, thankful that he can get at least one or two more hours of sleep before he has to get up and get ready for work. When he slides into bed
he doesn’t even bother getting undressed. Beside him, Mary stirs awake.

“What happened?” she asks sleepily. “Was he all right?”

“No. I ended up having to take him to the A&E.”

“God,” Mary whispers, and there is a short pause in which he thinks she may have fallen back to sleep. But then she speaks again. “That’s horrible, John, it really is, don’t get me wrong. I feel bad for the kid, I truly do. But you need to be careful. You know how easily things can get misconstrued in this day and age. If someone were to get the wrong idea it would ruin you.”

John sighs, because this is not something that he wants to be thinking about right now. “I know, Mary,” he says, turning over on his side so that he faces away from her, hoping she will take the hint.

She does not.

“That’s why I think you should just stay away from that kid,” she continues, heedless of his exhaustion. “You’ve helped him out once and now he can get help from someone else, someone meant to help children in these situations.”

John doesn’t answer her. The thought of leaving Sherlock alone now, after this, is incomprehensible. He can’t do it. He won’t.

“Just go back to sleep,” he tells her, voice hard in the darkness of their bedroom. “You don’t have to worry about that anymore. I’ll get it sorted.”
Catching Fire

Chapter Notes

Chapter title is taken from The Hunger Games trilogy. I finally earn a little bit of that rating I put up there, instead of just making empty promises. It’s just one-sided, though, so don’t get too excited yet :-( Thanks to Writing Keeper for the beta and Indelible_Ink for the beta and the Brit-pick. I should probably be doing school work, but I’ve had the worst week and want to live in fanfiction forever...

At A&E, the doctor had told Sherlock to take some time off from school until the worst of the bruising and swelling went down. John knows that the brunet was more than happy with that. But without being able to see Sherlock every day, John finds that he only thinks about the boy more.

He tries to stop himself from texting Sherlock constantly to see how he is feeling, where he is staying, if he is eating. And he mostly succeeds. He allows himself only one or two texts to his student a day. The responses are always prompt and reassuring, if a little vague. John simply attributes that to Sherlock feeling uncomfortable around him now that the teacher knows about Sherlock’s home situation. The older man tries not to worry so much and he manages to calm his nerves with a few drinks each evening, though it doesn’t erase the apprehension completely.

John still goes to the coffee shop every night that they usually meet up, thinking—hoping—that Sherlock might show, but the boy stays away. So when John finally receives a text from Sherlock one day during school asking if he will be at the coffee shop that night, he tries not to smile like a loon as he responds. Then he remembers that Sherlock isn’t actually omniscient, even though it seems that way sometimes, and so he lets himself grin, trying hard not to think very long on his excitement.

But no matter how much he tells himself that he isn’t eager to see his student again, he isn’t anxious to lay eyes on him once more, there is no ignoring the happy buzz that grows and carries him through the rest of his day. Every single one of his colleagues thinks that his euphoric mood is simply due to the fact that he has been using his cane less and less over the past several days, until he barely has a need for it any longer. He lets them think what they will and doesn’t let it dampen his mood. Even while he is at home with Mary later that day, having another uncomfortably silent dinner with her, he is practically humming with excitement and nighttime can’t come fast enough. As they are cleaning up, he lets Mary know that Mike wants to meet him at the pub for a pint and Mary just makes a noncommittal noise in the back of her throat, not even looking up at him as she continues the washing up. So he leaves her to it and heads upstairs to get ready, running up the steps like a child simply because he can.

He changes his clothes, even though he doesn’t usually. He figures that, since Sherlock wasn’t in school today, he wouldn’t know anyways. Besides, John wants to wear his warmer black donkey jacket but his current shirt doesn’t really match it. Since he has already changed his shirt, he figures he may as well change his trousers and shoes, too. He hums to himself as he stands in the bathroom over the sink, preparing everything for a quick shave. He hadn’t had the chance to do it that morning and he is feeling decidedly stubbly. The fact that he has always thought he looks better clean shaven doesn’t even cross his mind. He is meticulous while shaving; being sure to get every spot, even the area below his ears that he usually forgets. When he is done he briefly
considers a quick shower but decides against it, using a bit of his nicer cologne instead. He picks at his hair in the mirror, wanting to give it that messy, tousled look that he knows seems rather dashing on him. When he is finally satisfied with his appearance it is just about time for him to leave. As he heads out the front door he shouts out to Mary, “Going now, be back in a bit!” and closes the door behind him before she has even responded.

When he gets to the coffee shop he parks and can’t help one more look in the rearview mirror. Satisfied with what he sees, he gives himself a nervous smile before he decides to head in. The door to the shop opens easily and John’s stomach flutters nervously as his eyes rove over the inside of the small room and finally land on Sherlock.

He feels his face break into a large, happy smile when he spots the boy at their usual table. It has been almost two weeks since John has last laid eyes on him and he is pleased to see that most of the bruises on Sherlock’s face are almost gone, the ghastly colours looking much more subtle. The swelling that had contorted his right eye and cheek is non-existent now. All in all the brunet looks rather well, if a little tired, but maybe his usual double espresso will help with that.

“Sherlock,” he says on a relieved sigh and moves towards the teen. He hasn’t realised how worried he has been until he is able to see for himself that Sherlock is indeed safe and doing well. He reaches the table quickly and has to stop himself from giving his student a hug when he comes near him. Instead he falls heavily into the chair next to Sherlock, grinning like a fool.

“How have you been? Where have you been staying? Are you eating?” John can’t help but ask him in quick succession. The questions are all a jumble of words but he needs to know; he has to hear that Sherlock has been okay.

Sherlock simply chuckles at his impatience. “I’m fine. I promise. Everything is sorted. You don’t have to worry so much.”

“Are you sure?” John stresses. “I just keep thinking about—”

“Yes, John,” Sherlock assures him. “It’s all okay.”

A part of John doesn’t believe him, but he can see that Sherlock doesn’t want to be coddled right now so he reluctantly lets the subject go. “Yeah, all right,” he says warily, giving the boy one more good looking over just to be sure there are no new marks or bruises. When he is satisfied with Sherlock’s state he asks with a smile, “So what have you been doing with yourself on your impromptu holiday from school?”

Sherlock rolls his eyes and his shoulders slump in exasperation. “Being mind-numbingly bored,” he answers with a fervor that makes John laugh. “I swear, John, without access to my experiments at home for the first week I had absolutely nothing of importance to do with my life. And even when I went back after the second week, I usually left during the day when I knew my father would stumble back home to sleep off his night at the pub. I feel like I’m going mad. I’ve had to resort to making deductions about the people and ducks that visit the park during the middle of the day.”

John continues to laugh and feels so much better, so much lighter than he has the past two weeks. “So you’ve stayed away from home as much as you can, then?” he asks wonderingly. He hadn’t thought that Sherlock would actually listen to him when John had said that he shouldn’t go back for a few days.
“I didn’t want to,” Sherlock tells him truthfully. “I thought about at least sneaking into my room when I knew my father wouldn’t be home that first week but,” he blushes and looks away from John, almost coyly. “I knew you didn’t want me to do that, so I’ve stayed away as much as I could.”

John is stunned almost speechless. He can’t remember the last time he has told Sherlock to do something that the kid has not fought him tooth and nail over. He is proud and more than a little happy. “Good, Sherlock,” he praises the teen, beaming at him. “I’m glad. You don’t know how happy that makes me, knowing that you actually listened to me for once.”

Sherlock huffs at him, irritated. “Contrary to what you believe, I don’t purposefully try to go looking for trouble,” he states petulantly.

John laughs at the adorable put-out look on Sherlock’s face. “So it’s just been deductions about stay-at-home mums and waterfowl for you?” he asks.

As John is sitting there staring at him, Sherlock surprises him yet again by blushing suddenly, a light pink dusting of colour on his cheeks and across the bridge of his nose. He turns away from John and looks down at the cup in front of him and mumbles, “Actually, I seem to have spent an inordinate amount of time these past two weeks thinking about you.”

John pauses for a moment and can do nothing but stare, certain he has heard Sherlock wrong. But no, he knows he isn’t mistaken. Sherlock is sitting across from him, still blushing and not meeting his gaze, and John knows what he has heard.

He isn’t sure there is a safe response to Sherlock’s statement, so he decides to err on the side of caution and not say anything at all. But Sherlock doesn’t relent so easily. He suddenly glances up from his cup, straight into John’s eyes, and his face looks so open and honest. Innocent. John doesn’t know if he’s ever seen Sherlock look so innocent.

“Is that normal?” the teen asks, and if John didn’t know him so well he would say that Sherlock is taking the piss, just pretending to be confused by such simple biological urges to make John look and feel like an idiot. But John does know better; he knows that when it comes to matters of the body such as this, Sherlock is very much like a child, unknowing and very willing to gather new information.

“I…suppose so,” John says slowly, choosing his words carefully. He is walking on thin ice right now, he knows this. A wrong word, a certain tone, can change the whole meaning of this conversation, and John will be damned if he is going to be the one stepping into that mess first. “Your mind has obviously latched onto me as some sort of caretaker, a form of protection. It seems only natural that you would spend a lot of time thinking about this new sense of safety, especially when you’ve never had it before.”

Sherlock nods, as if he understands completely, but there is still the edge of a frown crinkling his usually smooth brow. “That makes sense, but that doesn’t explain the way my body reacts.”

Shit. “Your body?” John asks, before he can stop himself. His mouth has gone so dry that he swallows, licks his lips nervously, and can’t feel his tongue.

“Arousal, John,” Sherlock clarifies, looking straight at him from across the table. His gaze is penetrating and unyielding. “Intense arousal. This is the first time that the feelings have been so strong that I simply cannot ignore them or will them away. I’ve felt the rather urgent impulse to indulge my body in these feelings. Quite frequently, I might add.”
Oh, God. “Sherlock, I don’t really think this is something that you should be telling me.” John can hear the words coming out of his mouth, a jumble of noises as he rushes to say them. He licks his lips nervously again and looks around the shop, wanting to be sure that no one can hear them. As usual, they are alone in their secluded little corner. “We shouldn’t be discussing anything even remotely linked to your...your body.” God, that body...

“Why not?” Sherlock asks plainly.

“Because it’s not appropriate, Sherlock!” John can’t help the shrill note that has crept into his voice now, that thin edge of hysteria and panic. “I’m your teacher, and I’m almost 20 years older than you, and you’re not even old enough to legally be considered an adult,” he lists the reasons off. “But, mostly, this just isn’t something people normally talk about in social settings with acquaintances like this. That information is very private and should be kept that way.”

“Really?” Sherlock asks in disbelief. “So you have no interest in knowing that I’ve pleased myself to thoughts of you twelve times since that night that you took me to hospital?” John feels his heart rate sky-rocket and there is a strange tightening low in his belly, a distinct warmth that he desperately tries to ignore. “You don’t want to know that sometimes I need to go twice in one day? That I know I won’t even be able to walk into your classroom when I get back to school without remembering what I have imagined you doing to me in the dark as I lie on my bed at night, under the sheets as I stroked myself—”

“That’s enough, Sherlock!” John’s tone is harsh and biting, completely military and absolutely furious, and Sherlock’s mouth automatically snaps shut and his eyes go wide at the sound of it. “Christ! You can’t talk about stuff like that! It’s not done!”

But Sherlock rouses himself quickly enough. “You seemed to enjoy listening to it,” he says with a smirk, glancing down at John’s lap.

Fuck. John drops his hands quickly to try to cover up the slight bulge that is evident in his trousers but he knows it won’t do much good. “Sherlock,” he says warningly, drawing the teen’s gaze away from his crotch. “This conversation is nowhere near being appropriate any longer and I think we should forget that it ever happened.” Please, God, let him just agree to forget that it ever happened, he prays frantically.

God doesn’t pay him any mind.

“Why?” Sherlock asks him. He has that confused look on his face again, as if John has said something that he doesn’t understand. “I thought you would have been pleased that I returned your feelings.”

What?

“What?” Now it’s John’s turn to be incomprehensibly confused.

“It’s obvious, John,” Sherlock tells him, as if it is the simplest thing in the world. “It’s been quite obvious for a while now. The meetings, the long conversations, the smiles, the touches. You gave me your number and you let me text you. You held me.” Sherlock’s eyes are boring into John’s now and the man can’t seem to look away, doesn’t have the strength any longer. “But, honestly, I thought that tonight was the perfect night to tell you that I reciprocated your feelings because you were obviously expecting it.”

John shakes his head frantically, and when he speaks his voice is breathless. “I don’t know what you mean—”
“Please,” Sherlock scoffs. “You forget that I see everything. You wanted to hug me when you first came in. And on top of that, I can also tell that you washed up before you came to meet me, which you never do.” He points at John’s chest and John has never felt more like a bug under a microscope than he does right now, with Sherlock’s strange eyes flaying him open ferociously, mercilessly. “You’ve changed into clean clothes—they’re too pressed for you to have worn them all day—and you are freshly shaven. You put on your best cologne—I know it’s your best because you don’t wear it to school, so it’s something that you only use for special occasions—and you even brushed your teeth before you left your house. I can smell the mint of your toothpaste on your breath. You even styled your hair differently.” He glares at John accusingly. “You took the effort to look highly presentable. And the way you’ve been looking at me all night…I thought you would have been happy that I returned your feelings.”

John shakes his head, trying to clear it mostly, but also rebuffing Sherlock’s words and willing them to go away. “No, Sherlock, no,” he states frantically, trying to calm himself with his own words. “There’s no feelings; there’s nothing to be reciprocated or returned.” He looks the boy squarely in the face because he wants Sherlock to know that what he is saying is the God’s honest truth, he has to make Sherlock understand that this can’t be happening. “I don’t feel that way about you. I’m sorry, I know what it’s like to have a crush on someone when you’re a teenager, but I need you to know right now that you’re wrong for once. I don’t have any romantic feelings for you. I just worry about you, is all.”

John pauses and stares across the table, taking in Sherlock’s slightly stricken look. He sighs heavily. “I think we should probably call it a night for now,” he says then, wanting to just make his escape as quickly as possible with what is left of his battered dignity. “Just…don’t think about me anymore, in that way,” he pleads with his student one last time. “It’s highly inappropriate and it…it makes me uncomfortable. And certainly don’t tell me if you continue to do it. Do you understand?”

Sherlock stares at him for a long time, face gone completely blank and devoid of all emotion. But when he speaks his voice sounds confused, as if he doesn’t know quite what to say. So he settles on a simple, “So, all of this,” he gestures weakly between them, “not good?” His voice sounds like a broken heart.

John sighs and nods his head, bringing a hand up to pinch the bridge of his nose in exasperation. “Yeah, Sherlock. A bit not good.”

* *

When John gets home he goes straight to the bathroom on the main floor of the house, avoiding the en suite in their bedroom where he knows Mary is sleeping. He has barely managed to get the door closed and locked before he is fumbling to open his trousers with shaky hands, mind buzzing.

_God, that boy._ He is driving John crazy.

He is so desperate for release that he plunges a hand inside his pants without even pulling his clothing down his hips.

He thinks about Sherlock, alone in his dark bedroom at night, panting heavily and sweating profusely as he strokes himself, John’s name on those perfect, plump lips. He wonders what Sherlock thinks about while he masturbates to thoughts of John. Does Sherlock imagine John kissing him, John tasting his mouth as he lies pliant beneath the older man’s body, so lost in sensation that he can’t even move? Does Sherlock think about John’s tongue on his cock, lapping at the salty juice that leaks freely from the tip? Does Sherlock think about John fucking him, splitting him open and pounding into his tight little hole? _God._ John’s hand works furiously over
his own hard prick, close now.

Does Sherlock finger himself open and wish it is John’s cock that is penetrating him while he stokes himself to completion?

*Oh, shit.*

That is all that it takes to tip John over the edge. He comes hard, the air knocked out of his lungs by the sheer force of it. He can’t remember the last time he came like that. Hell, he can’t remember the last time he had been that frantic for a wank. He looks down at himself and sees that he has made an absolute mess of his pants and trousers. The bottom of his shirt is dirty, too, since he hadn’t even bothered to pull it up. Jesus, he feels like a kid. Like a randy teenager who wanks desperately, without shame. Like—

Christ. He can’t even stop thinking about that boy long enough to recover from an amazing orgasm. Although John figures that makes sense, since it is said boy who has caused such an orgasm in the first place. He leans against the bathroom door and tries to catch his breath, panting heavily. Not for the first time he wonders just what in the hell Sherlock is doing to him. Ever since he met the peculiar brunet he has felt like he has been caught up in a whirlwind that he did not choose and that he has no control over. The teen seems to have taken over his life and John doesn’t even really know how it happened.

John groans softly to himself when he thinks about how fucked he is.

He decides to just undress in the bathroom and wash up downstairs. After he is done cleaning himself up, he tosses his clothes in the laundry so that Mary won’t see them and then climbs the stairs to his bedroom. He slips into bed beside his wife quietly, not needing to even turn on any lights. He lies on his side of the bed and drifts off into a comfortable sleep, secure in the knowledge that no one is any wiser about his actions tonight.
Sherlock comes back to school the next day and John tries not to blush like a bloody schoolboy while he gives his lesson to Sherlock’s class, but he doesn’t succeed. He figures it is best to pretend that their last conversation never happened, though, and Sherlock seems content to go along with him. Another week of secret smiles, butterflies in his stomach, four late night cups of coffee and ninety-seven text messages pass by in a blur and before John knows it, the weekend of his first teacher’s workshop is there. It is just a three-day trip for a few of the teachers to sit in on lectures about effective education management, but he has yet to let Sherlock know that he will be away for the weekend, so when they met at the shop on Thursday night John tells him.

“Just the weekend?” Sherlock asks, wanting to be sure.

“Yes, Sherlock. Just the weekend, I promise,” John reassures him. It won’t be any different from every other weekend; the two never spend Fridays and Saturdays out together. Those evenings are too busy for anonymity and are universally considered “date nights”, so John has made a point to steer clear of them. Besides, if John goes “out with Mike to the pub” every weekend, Mary would certainly become suspicious. There are just certain things early middle-aged, married men don’t do and that is one of them. Going to the pub a couple of times during the middle of the work week to blow off some steam is expected; going out every single weekend alone with just one mate is not.

“Sunday as well?” Sherlock prods, a concerned look on his face.

“Yeah, ‘fraid so.” While they never meet on Friday or Saturday, Sundays are a different story altogether. Sundays are safe; Sundays are lazy and slow and a blessing after two full days without Sherlock. John loves Sundays. “But I’ll be back by Monday afternoon so maybe we can grab a cuppa that night, if Mary doesn’t want me to spend time with her.” ‘Which she probably won’t,’ hangs heavy and unspoken in the air between them.

Sherlock throws him a coy glance underneath long eyelashes. “So, since Mary won’t be there, does that mean that I can text you more often?”

“I suppose so,” John answers him warily.

“Ring you?” the boy asks excitedly.

“Don’t push it, Sherlock.”
Received message: Are you there yet? SH

Sent: Why are you so concerned with whether I've arrived at the workshop or not?

Received: Because the sooner you get there and see how frightfully dull it is, the sooner you will decide to cut your stay short and come back. SH

John stares down at the screen of his phone, re-reading Sherlock’s text. That is actually…kind of sweet. He doesn’t tell Sherlock this, of course, and when Mike asks him if it’s Mary texting him, John makes a noncommittal noise and quickly puts his phone away, careful not to pull it out again around his colleagues.

*

Received message: I miss you being here. The substitute they brought in to take your place is alarmingly stupid. Doesn’t seem to know a thing about biology. SH

John hasn’t even been gone a day and Sherlock hasn’t stopped texting him. In fact, he has just barely made it in to the hotel where the workshop is being held. He will be sharing a room with Mike for the weekend so he lets his friend check them in at the front desk while he types out a text to Sherlock.

Sent: Be nice, Sherlock. Please. I don’t want you to get in any more trouble.

Sherlock doesn’t respond and John can only hope that the loon hasn’t been suspended by the time he gets back.

*

It is later in the day that John first realises that he has not spoken to Mary at all since he left. He tries hard not to think about the fact that he has exchanged over thirty text messages with Sherlock and not a single one in regards to his wife, but he doesn’t succeed in the slightest and he ends up feeling rather guilty.

He is somewhat irritated that she hasn’t bothered to ask if he has arrived all right, but he swallows his pride and shoots her a quick text. She is his wife, after all, and he supposes that she deserves to know that he is okay and didn’t burn to death in a fiery car crash on his way to the workshop.

Sent message: Just wanted to let you know that I got in all right.

Her response is quick and short.

Received: Ok -M

He expects something else may come after it, so he waits a few minutes. When nothing does he frowns down at his mobile and tries again.

Sent: How has your day gone? Anything interesting happen?

Received: No not really -M

He sighs in frustration at her terseness and tries not to think about the fact that Sherlock has been pestering him with texts all day wondering how the trip has gone, if he is enjoying himself, if there is any chance he will come home early—yet all he is getting out of his bloody wife are ambiguous
responses. But he won’t give up his attempts to engage her in a simple conversation so he starts on a reply.

(Typing) The trip up here was good. Mike did the funniest thing—

Received: I can’t really talk right now. Maybe later. Bye -M

He stares at the screen of his mobile for so long that the timed screen saver automatically shuts it off.

*

Since they travelled that day, the workshop is only holding a short introductory speech in one of the hotel conference rooms and then a smaller class afterwards, so that everyone can still catch a timely dinner. John’s phone buzzes so often during the welcoming speech that he has to take it off vibrate and put it completely on silent.

Received message: Have you decided to come home early yet? SH

Sent: No, Sherlock. I’m not coming home early, I told you.

Received: But I’m bored. SH

Sent: You’re always bored.

Received: But this time I’m REALLY bored! SH

John huffs out a silent laugh and is about to respond but the introductory speaker is finishing up and everyone is getting ready for the first class to begin. It turns out to be rather interesting and John completely forgets about his phone in the pocket of his trousers for the next hour and a half.

When the class is finally over he remembers to pull it out and check it. It doesn’t surprise him to find five texts from Sherlock, each one sounding increasingly more agitated.

Received: Where did you go? SH

Received: John? SH

Received: Don’t ignore me! SH

Received: Why aren’t you answering? SH

Received: Did I make you angry? SH

John figures that he needs to text him back as quickly as possible so that the boy doesn’t have a nervous breakdown.

Sent: Christ, Sherlock. I was in a lecture. Don’t worry, you didn’t make me angry. Although I think it’s nice that you worried about it :)

He sends the text off, unable to keep the teasing tone from creeping into his words. The reply is immediate and irritated, making John laugh.

Received: It’s not nice. Don’t ignore me again. SH

*
Later in the evening, as he is lying in bed after having a quick dinner with Mike down at the hotel restaurant, John texts Mary again.

Sent: How about now?

Received: What -M

Sent: Can you talk now?

There is a long stretch of time where she doesn’t respond, and then finally:

Received: Yeah, I guess -M

Now it’s his turn to pause, because he suddenly realises that he doesn’t really know quite what to say to her.

He settles for a rather safe ‘How did your day go?’

Received: Ok -M

John sighs in frustration at her responses. He tries again.

Sent: What are you going to do for dinner?

John cringes even as he sends that particular text. God, does he not have anything left in common with his wife of ten years that he has to resort to asking asinine questions about what she is going to be eating soon?

Received: I’m not going out to meet anybody, if that’s what you’re asking, John. I really hate that you feel the need to check up on me throughout the day, like you’re keeping track of me -M

John groans as he reads her message, frustrated and angry. Why does she have to turn everything into a row?

Sent: No, Mary, that’s not what I’m doing! I just wanted to talk!

There is another long silence, but then his phone pings lightly.

Received: I’m going to go start dinner, I’ll talk to you later John -M

He doesn’t answer her back. Instead, he throws his mobile across the bed with a weary sigh.

*

The next day starts bright and early with a message from Sherlock, and John wonders if the boy sleeps at all. Most kids his age would use the weekend for the chance of a lie in, but John can’t imagine Sherlock being still for long enough to enjoy a decent night’s sleep, let alone a lazy morning in bed.

Received: I wish you were back already. SH

Sent: Sherlock, it’s been 2 days.

John can’t help the wide smile that splits his lips, even if he wants Sherlock to think that he is exasperated. It is nice to feel missed by someone.
Received: 2 mind-numbingly dull days. I haven’t had anyone to drink coffee with. It’s lonely. SH

John’s breakfast is getting cold on the table next to his elbow, long forgotten. Spar ing a quick glance to make sure that Mike is absorbed in the newspaper, he types out his response.

Sent: Are you all right? You’re not hurt, are you?

He sends it and then thinks to add an additional ‘It’s just…you seem awfully clingy.’

Sherlock’s response is quick in coming.

Received: I’m fine, and I’m not being clingy!!! SH

John grins and is relieved to know that Sherlock is all right. Ever since the night he took the boy to hospital John has not been able to stop worrying about him.

Sent: Lol. Whatever makes you feel better.

Sent: You don’t have to be embarrassed about it. I think it’s sweet. It makes me feel good, knowing that you miss me.

Received: Why wouldn’t I miss you, John? You’re very miss-able. SH

Sent: Well, Mary doesn’t seem to miss me much.

He winces after hitting the send button and wishes like hell that he could take that text back. But he can’t, so he decides that the next best thing is to let Sherlock know that it was a mistake.

Sent: Christ, I don’t know what compels me to keep saying things like that to you. Sorry, you should just ignore that text. It’s not appropriate.

His mobile stays silent for a long while and John is able to eat half of his cold breakfast before it goes off again.

Received: Clearly Mary just doesn’t know what she’s missing. SH

John stares unblinking ly at the screen of his mobile, at a loss. Most of Sherlock’s texts these past two days have hinted at flirting, just barely skirting the right side of decent, but this…this is clearly Sherlock flirting with him. Inappropriate, his mind warns him, and he agrees whole-heartedly. He sends Sherlock a rather formal-sounding text stating that he is about to go into the first of his classes for the day and to please not disturb him.

He is extremely relieved when the kid miraculously obeys him and doesn’t text him for the rest of the day.

*

Later that night, the soft ping of his text tone wakes him. He was able to turn in early for once, without Sherlock coercing him into clandestine meetings in coffee houses with late-night caffeine-filled drinks. He knows only one person could possibly be texting him at this hour, and he looks over at the bedside table where his phone is laying to see that the screen has come on, bright in the darkness around him. He gives the bed across the room a quick glance to be sure that Mike hasn’t woken up and then reaches for his mobile.

Unsurprisingly enough, it is a text from Sherlock.
Received: Are you there? SH

He heaves a sigh but responds.

Sent: Sherlock, it’s the middle of the night!

Received: It’s not that late, don’t be so dramatic. I’m bored. We would just be leaving the coffee house about now, but our conversations usually serve to keep me entertained for hours afterward. There’s nothing to stimulate me while you’re away. SH

John groans in frustration and thinks that his earlier guess that Sherlock doesn’t often sleep is quite true.

Sent: Yeah, well, I’m sleeping so you can just “entertain” yourself.

Received: Is that permission? SH

He frowns down at his mobile, wondering if sleep is still addling his brain.

Sent: What?

Received: You just told me I can entertain myself, but only you can keep me properly occupied. So, if you’re not at the coffee shop to talk to me and you won’t text me, that only leaves one option of how I can possibly keep myself entertained, and you don’t even have to participate. It’s a win-win situation. SH

With a sickening swoop of his stomach John suddenly realises what Sherlock means and he begins to frantically type out a response, eyes wide and fingers shaking.

(Typing) Sherlock. Don’t—

Received: Picture message

It is a photo of Sherlock’s pyjama covered groin, with his hand innocently placed in his lap.

Sent: Sherlock…Don’t. You. Dare.

But his mobile pings again, heedless of John’s anxiety.

Received: Picture message

This time it is a picture of the boy’s stomach, sleep shirt rucked up and belly button exposed, the tips of his long fingers just barely dipping into the waistband of his pyjama bottoms.

John swallows hard and licks his lips. He can feel sweat begin to break out along his hairline and a distinctly uncomfortable tingling sensation encompass his skin, not unlike the feeling he usually gets when he knows something bad is about to happen. He usually only feels it when he is having a massive row with his wife or when he is getting shot at.

Sent: I mean it Sherlock. This is not okay!

Received: Picture message

Sherlock’s hand is completely inside his pyjama bottoms now, but he has thankfully kept them up around his slim hips. Still, John can tell by the bulge at his groin that Sherlock is fisting his own cock, and he can even see the tip of it where it strains against the cotton.
Desperate now, John sends another text.

_Sent: Sherlock STOP_

_Received: Picture message_

The next picture is an awkward angle of Sherlock’s torso. At the top of the screen John can see the bottom of his face—his mouth and his chin. Sherlock has two fingers inside his plush lips (John’s cock does not twitch at the fact that it is the fingers the boy had around his cock just a few minutes ago) and the rest of the picture shows that Sherlock has rucked up his pyjama top farther, bunching it underneath his armpits so that his belly and nipples are exposed, tight and pink and good _God_. John is going to lose his mind.

_Sent: Sherlock if you dont stop right now I swear i will change my number as soon as I get home and will not give it to you again. I’m not joking around about this_

His texts are frantic now, proper punctuation and spelling be damned. His fingers shake as they fly over the touch-screen keypad and he can’t be bothered to waste the time to fix them before he sends them off.

_Sent: I’ve asked you before not to do this sort of thing. Its inappropriate and can get me in a lot of trouble. If you can’t respect the boundaries that I am trying to put up, I don’t think we can keep talking like this. This is risky enough as it is._

It takes a moment for an answer to come through and John holds his breath until he can see that it isn’t another picture message. He releases it in a great huff of a sigh and feels his body relax exponentially.

_Received: I’m sorry John_

_Received: I won’t do it again, just please_

_Received: Don’t stop talking to me_

The three messages come one right after the other, back to back, and John can tell by the look of them that Sherlock is worried—he is usually a stickler for punctuation even in his texts, and he’s no longer using full stops or signing his initials.

John sighs in frustration and decides that he really, really doesn’t want to deal with this at one in the bloody morning, so he sends a terse reply that he knows won’t assuage Sherlock’s anxiety.

_Sent: Go to sleep, Sherlock._

_Sent: NOW._

_Sent: We’ll talk about this more when I get back. Please don’t text me again._

And for the rest of the night, his mobile stays blessed silent.
Chapter Notes

Warnings: There's a lot more dubcon in this chapter than in the last, but it is still mostly due to John's guilt at the situation. I should also probably warn you against Sherlock being a bit manipulative and not good in this chapter, much like the last.

Beta’d and Brit-picked by a_solitary_cyclist & Indelible_Ink. Title is taken from the song of the same name by the band Little Dragon.

John is in a foul mood for the rest of the weekend. He snaps at Mike when the man tries to joke around with him, and he can’t stop himself from checking his mobile constantly, both hoping and dreading to see a text from Sherlock again. Hell, even a text from Mary that will no doubt turn into a row would be a welcome distraction for him right about now. Anything just to get his mind off of what happened the previous night.

But he should know better than to expect a ring or text from his wife. Without Sherlock sending him messages, his phone stays mockingly quiet. When Mike asks him about it and John gives the man some vague answer, his friend just thinks that he has had another argument with Mary and doesn’t bother him again.

By the time he gets back home late Monday afternoon, John is tired. He hadn’t slept well the remainder of the weekend and he has been on edge ever since the whole incident with Sherlock took place. He hasn’t had a drink in days, not wanting to set up camp in the hotel bar around his coworkers while on a trip for his job, and he wants a pint in the worst way. As he pulls up to the drive in front of his house, he lets out a sigh of relief. His thoughts are filled with the nice, long shower that awaits him and the comfy bed that he can fall into. The reprieve is short lived, though, when he remembers the talk that he needs to have with Sherlock.

Sighing heavily, he shoots off a quick text to his student, short and terse and inviting no in-depth response:

Sent: Meet me at the coffee shop in 3 hours to discuss this situation. Send me a text stating if you’ve received this or not. Don’t say anything else to me.

Shortly after he has sent the message, his phone pings.

Received: Will see you there. SH

He decides that after his indulgent shower he will take a short nap, because he knows that he won’t have the strength for Sherlock any other way. As soon as his head hits the pillow he is asleep, and he doesn’t stir at all until his alarm goes off half an hour before he is supposed to be at the coffee shop.

John sighs as he gets out of bed and dresses, washing up quickly before heading downstairs. He meets Mary in the kitchen.

“Er, I’m going round to Mike’s to have him help me catch up on some of the exams and homework
that I didn’t get around to doing this weekend.” The lie sounds flimsy even to his own ears but if Mary notices she doesn’t say anything. She just hums a noncommittal noise at him and continues washing dishes in the sink, cleaning up from a dinner which she had by herself, yet again. She has barely looked at him since he came home and she hasn’t said more than a dismissive “hello” to him since he has returned.

He finds that he doesn’t really mind.

The drive to the coffee shop isn’t nearly long enough for John to gather his thoughts and plan out what exactly he wants to tell Sherlock, but as he pulls up to the kerb he supposes he will just have to wing this particular conversation. His stomach flutters with nervous butterflies as he turns off the engine and steps outside into the fading light from the setting sun, but he quickly extinguishes the feeling. He was a soldier for Christ’s sake; he fought in a bloody war. He is not going to get nervous over some schoolboy antics.

When he enters the coffee shop he sees that it is completely empty, as usual for the hour of night that he and Sherlock get together during the week. John has noticed that their meetings have been getting progressively later and later, until they are out at a time when very few others are visiting the secluded coffee shop that is tucked away into the back corner of one of the less busy side streets. Most people in the small town are at home with their families on weekday evenings, putting their kids to bed, or out at the more fashionable coffee shops, meeting at the Costa or the Starbucks right down the block. The small, family-owned coffee shop that John and Sherlock meet at, with its store-brand teas and poor service, isn’t the place where most people want to be spending their evenings.

John bypasses the empty counter as he walks into the shop, not bothering to even try to order a cuppa. He moves directly towards the table at the back where he can already see Sherlock waiting with his back to John, head hung low and shoulders hunched. As he comes up to the table, he clears his throat loudly to let Sherlock know that he is there and the boy jumps as if he hadn’t been expecting John to show. He turns to stare at John with wide eyes and a pale face.

“I didn’t text you again,” Sherlock tells him immediately, as soon as he sees John.

For a moment John is confused because the sentence is just so blunt, not prefaced by anything. “What?” he asks, sitting down heavily in the booth seat across from the brunet, the bench pushed flush against the corner of the wall so that it is practically blocking him in on his right side.

“You told me not to text you again and I listened,” Sherlock explains, his gaze imploring, and John can hear a slight tremble in his deep voice, as if he is scared. “And when I texted you today it was only because you told me to. I can listen to you, John. I can do the things that you tell me to do.”

Suddenly John understands: Sherlock is trying to prove a point. He’s trying to let John know that he can be good, so that John won’t make him stop texting. The man had no idea that having someone—anyone—to talk to meant so much to Sherlock, and he feels slightly guilty for using their friendship as a bargaining chip, but he doesn’t know what else to do. His life is on the line if things get out of hand, and he won’t throw everything he has away just because Sherlock wants to play at being a grown up.

With these thoughts in mind, John steels himself for the conversation. He squares his shoulders back and sits ram-rod straight, using every bit of his military bearing to intimidate the younger male in front of him. “Sherlock, you can’t keep doing things like that,” John tells him, voice stern and hard. He sees Sherlock flinch slightly at the sound of his tone, and tries not to let his resolve waver. “It makes me uncomfortable and you force me into compromising situations. Once you send pictures like that over texts they stay as virtual information forever; they can’t be deleted.
They are tracked. Now, if my wife gets curious and wants to go through my text messages, all she has to do is request a transcript from our provider. And anyone else who might want to dig a little deeper into our relationship can see everything we’ve sent. Do you understand what I’m telling you, Sherlock? Do you see why I’m angry?”

“Yes, but—” Sherlock dares a glance up at John, but the man knows that if he lets Sherlock speak John’s whole demeanor will crumble into a thousand tiny pieces. He hates talking to Sherlock this way, hates treating him like this, but he has no other choice. He knows this.

“No ‘buts’, John cuts him off. And then he goes for the finishing touch, the thing he knows will bring Sherlock up short.

“I’m very upset with you,” John says softly, and he lets his disappointment tinge his voice. “What you did was stupid and reckless and immature. So immature.” He shakes his head, not looking at Sherlock any longer. “I’m disappointed in you, Sherlock. I had hoped that you would respect my boundaries and not do anything else to make me uncomfortable, but if I can’t trust you then I have to stop this—” he is going to say relationship but catches himself just in time “—this with you. Have I made myself clear?”

John can see Sherlock’s lips tremble and he looks frightfully pale, almost scared. “Yes,” Sherlock answers on a broken whisper with a vigorous nod of his curly head. “It’s just…” he trails off, biting his lip and looking away from John.

“What?” John asks, his tone softer now that Sherlock has told him that he understands. He doesn’t want Sherlock to be worried that he is going to leave him any longer. “What is it?”

Sherlock looks as though he isn’t going to say what is on his mind. For a long moment he doesn’t speak and John leaves him alone, doesn’t pester him, because John suddenly isn’t sure that this is something he wants to hear after all. When Sherlock finally opens his mouth, his voice is small and unsure, and he isn’t looking at John again.

“No one has ever…treated me like you do,” he tells John slowly, as if he is choosing his words carefully. “And I can’t help…being attracted to you. I—I like you.”

John’s heart drops to his feet and he closes his eyes against the reality of this moment. He knew it was coming, it had been bound to happen right from the start, and he should have bloody well known better than to let it go on this long. But he has been selfish, finally finding someone that he can talk to, that enjoys his company. He has been lonely and vulnerable and a downright fool to let things get to this point, but he can’t change the past. He can only start to make better decisions for the future.

He lets out a soft, sad sigh and opens his eyes again to find Sherlock staring at him beseechingly, looking as if he is seconds away from tears. He wants desperately to pull his gaze away from the heartache in the boy’s face but he feels that Sherlock deserves more respect than that. He deserves for John to look him in the eye when he does this.

“If that’s the case, Sherlock, and you feel that way about me, then we should stop talking anyway. It’s not fair to you, and it’s not safe.”

He expects Sherlock’s resolve to crack. He expects a few silent tears. He expects the boy’s façade to crumple. He expects to be yelled at, stormed out on, handed over to the police in a fit of scorned teenage revenge.

He does not expect for Sherlock to bite his bottom lip and set his face in a determined look, as if he
had been anticipating John’s words. He certainly does not expect for Sherlock to shuffle over to the bench seat next to John, to John’s immediate left now instead of across the table from him, one knee on the cushion and his other foot on the floor. John is effectively boxed in now, trapped in a precarious position. He turns in the seat so that he faces Sherlock head on, torso angled towards the threat, because he will not back down from this. He can see the changeable colour of Sherlock’s eyes so clearly, beautiful and entrancing, like the boy’s cheekbones, his lips, his mind. John sucks in a breath and holds it, body going tense and rigid as his brain tries to comprehend what is happening, as he tries to find a way out of this new, dangerous situation.

But Sherlock is leaning closer now, reaching out a tentative hand that John can do nothing but stare at. Sherlock’s words, when he speaks, sound distant and tiny to John’s ears.

“Oh we could—instead…” The thin, pale hand that has been moving towards him finally makes contact with John’s body, a warm pressure on the man’s left thigh that shouldn’t be there, shouldn’t feel so good, shouldn’t make him crave more. He is frozen in his spot, eyes wide as he stares back at Sherlock, unsure of what to do. But when he sees Sherlock lean forward incrementally, John’s brain kicks back into gear.

Wrong! Bad! So very, very NOT GOOD!

John reaches out to place his own hand over Sherlock’s where it is gripping his thigh, and he tries to lift it off of him. Sherlock is surprisingly strong for someone so skinny, though, and he pushes back against John’s grip, clamping his fingers down on John’s leg, not letting go. He tries to lean towards John once more, who moves backwards on the bench seat a bit, out of his student’s reach.

“No,” John says with a shake of his head, voice low and commanding. “Stop.”

Sherlock doesn’t listen, though. He pushes his hand farther up John’s thigh, rubbing along the man’s trouser leg and coming dangerously close to—

“Sherlock, that’s enough!” John growls out, keeping his voice low so that they don’t draw any attention. Not that drawing attention is something of concern; John’s mind helpfully reminds him that the shop was empty when he walked in and has remained so the entire time he and Sherlock have spoken. John figures it will likely stay that way for some time, too. Sherlock probably knows this as well, and for that reason has decided to push his luck. The thought makes John’s jaw clench in growing frustration. He stops trying to be gentle with the boy and grips Sherlock’s hand tightly in his own, crushing the thin, fragile-feeling bones of the teen’s fingers in his anger. He pulls the hand off of his leg roughly and pushes the appendage back towards Sherlock, no longer taking care to not hurt him.

Sherlock doesn’t let that deter him, though, and continues leaning closer to John. In desperation, John scoots away from Sherlock as best he can in the booth, sliding sideways along the long vinyl cushion. He keeps his body turned towards Sherlock still, keeping him in his sight the entire time. John won’t take his eyes off of Sherlock for one second, afraid of what will happen if he does. Sherlock is unpredictable, John is coming to find, and highly impulsive. John is learning that he has to always be on his guard around him.

Sherlock, though, just takes the opportunity to move next to John in the space that the man has made, shuffling forward on the seat, closer now than he has ever been. John curses as his back comes up against the wall. The table is in front of him, Sherlock is closing in from his left side, and John realises that he is effectively trapped unless he wants to try to bodily throw Sherlock off of him and risk injuring the boy. The thought is reprehensible; Sherlock has had enough of people bruising and battering him to last a lifetime.
So John does the next best thing and brings up an arm to hold him off. However, it doesn’t do much good in their cramped confines, and Sherlock definitely has the advantage. He is facing John completely, one knee still on the seat while his other foot is on the floor, and he can lean all of his weight against John’s arm and push into it. And fuck it all if it isn’t his bad arm that John is holding up. It can’t take much weight or pressure, John knows, and he curses as it begins to tremble almost immediately. It falls back towards his body and brings Sherlock in with it, practically sprawling on John’s lap, pushed up tight with their torsos touching. Like this, Sherlock lets his knees slip over either side of John’s left leg on the seat, as good as straddling the man’s thigh in the awkward position they are in, half on top of John and pinning him down. Once the teen is close enough, he wastes no time in pressing his face into John’s neck and softly kissing the skin there.

At the first feel of the warm lips, John’s body jolts and he can hear his blood pounding in his ears. John tries harder to push Sherlock away but he definitely has the advantage of positioning. Sherlock lets his whole body fall against John’s, and the man can’t escape the warm weight of it with his back against the wall. Sherlock squirms against him and pushes impossibly closer, forcing John’s body to stretch out slightly and causing the man to extend his left leg along the seat, letting it settle deeper between Sherlock’s knees.

Immediately, John can feel the boy’s erection on his thigh.

“Christ,” John whimpers, voice soft and strained. He looks around desperately to see if anyone has noticed them. They are in their usual seat in the back of the shop, though, the one that they had chosen specifically because it was strategically placed away from prying eyes, and John’s sense of self-preservation screams at him that there was no one around to begin with. They are very much alone. “Sherlock,” he pleads, voice cracking now as he feels his student’s lips open up against the sensitive skin of his neck. There is a sudden warm wetness against his skin that shoots a pang of arousal straight down into his groin. “You have to stop. Please. I can’t—” his voice cuts off in something that closely resembles a sob.

“John,” Sherlock mumbles against his skin, pushing his hips harder against John’s thigh, and the man can feel how aroused Sherlock is, can sense how desperate. “I-I want you. And I know you want me, too. You wouldn’t allow me to do any of the things I’ve done already if you didn’t.” Sherlock’s hands come up to John’s chest, resting over his pectorals, sliding up to wrap around him and hold him closer as Sherlock shoves his face deeper into the crook of John’s neck, no longer kissing him but instead whispering words against the sensitive flesh there.

“The coffee shop, the rides home, the number to your mobile, the masturbating. I know what you did when you got home the night that I told you about touching myself to thoughts of you.” Sherlock pushes his hips into John again, rutting against him on the booth seat of the coffee shop. He lifts his head up marginally so that his lips are against the soft flesh of John’s earlobe as he whispers darkly. “It was so obvious.”

John shudders and moans. “Sherlock, we can’t—”

He is desperate for an escape now. He is still pushing against Sherlock’s body, trying to centre his focus on keeping Sherlock’s hips from grinding into him anymore, but he is trembling and his arms are growing ever weaker.

“Why not?” Sherlock asks him as he continues to press his warm lips against John’s ear, his jaw, his cheek. “Why not, John? I won’t tell anyone, I promise. No one ever has to find out. I know you want this. I can see it. I can feel it.” And suddenly there is a hand on John’s crotch, and when Sherlock squeezes him John is mortified to feel that he is completely hard, and he hates himself for
how good Sherlock’s hand on him feels.

“Please,” he whimpers, but his hips jerk up into Sherlock’s grasp in contradiction to his words. 
“Don’t make me…”

“I’m not making you do anything,” Sherlock mumbles against his skin, and John can feel the tip of Sherlock’s tongue sweep out and taste his skin. John groans. “I’m not forcing you at all. That way, when you finally give in and take me, you won’t be able to blame it on me. It will be because you gave in. You saw something that you wanted, and you took it. Take me, John. Please. I want you to."

And God, John can’t stand it anymore. The feel of Sherlock against him, the smell, the sound. All so close, everything John has been trying so hard not to think about recently, not to want…

The last of John’s resolve crumbles, taking with it what little control he had left, and he lets out a soft, helpless cry. He suddenly pulls Sherlock towards him instead of pushing him away in the uncomfortable position he has put himself in, shoved into the corner of the booth as he is. He lets the leg that Sherlock is rubbing himself against slide farther up onto the seat, slipping more comfortably under Sherlock and letting John ease into a better angle. Like this, he is more fully reclined under Sherlock, and John can grip the boy roughly by his arms and hold him tightly against his own body, rubbing them together closely, wonderfully, perfectly.

Sherlock lets out a surprised moan and John can feel the teen’s body sink down into him as John’s thigh slips deeper between Sherlock’s. The brunet is lying heavily on John’s chest and his curly head falls down into the crook of John’s neck, a comfortable weight that feels oddly right in the wholly uncomfortable, half-lying position John is in. John turns his face so that he can bury his nose and mouth in Sherlock’s soft hair, inhaling deeply as he ruts against Sherlock’s willing body. He pushes his hips up against Sherlock’s once, twice, again and again and again, rubbing their erections together over and over. John feels Sherlock shudder suddenly against him, a strangled moan tearing from his throat that he muffles against John’s neck. In his arms, John feels the youth go tense and rigid, and he becomes aware of a slowly creeping warmth that is seeping through his shirt and onto his belly. He realises suddenly that Sherlock has climaxed against him, in his pants, in the middle of a coffee shop.

Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ, what is he doing?

Sherlock is panting and boneless as he leans against John, who quickly takes the opportunity to push the brunet up and off of him, sitting him up and putting as much distance as he can between their bodies. It isn’t much on the short bench seat, truth be told, but it will have to suffice.

When Sherlock is able to hold his own weight again, John immediately lets go of him. He notices that his hands are trembling as he brings them up to bury his face into them, wanting to shut out the world as he tries to fight off the beginnings of a panic attack.

“Oh, fuck,” he mumbles into his hands, trying to get control of his breathing. “Oh, fuck. I can’t believe I did that. I’m so sorry, Sherlock. So, so sorry. Please, I didn’t mean to—”

He looks up at his student, afraid of what he will see on Sherlock’s face. Disgust, horror, fear. He expects all of these things, is scared to see them, terrified beyond words, but he has to look, he has to face what he’s done.

Instead, Sherlock is simply staring at him calmly, placidly, a deep red flush of pleasure staining his
cheeks, and John must be losing his bloody mind but he thinks he sees the hint of a smirk curling the corner of Sherlock’s lips. Those soft, warm lips that just a second ago were—

“John, it’s fine,” Sherlock tells him soothingly, cutting off his train of thought. Sherlock leans forward just a bit to place a reassuring hand on John’s leg, safely down by his knee this time. “It’s what I wanted, remember? I asked for it.”

John shakes his head frantically, licking his lips. “No, no, nononono. You can’t ask for something like that, you can’t want it,” he tells Sherlock, and his voice sounds completely wrecked. “You’re just a kid. Jesus, you’re just a kid.”

Sherlock frowns at him and reaches over to pull John’s hands away from his face. John tries to tug them back and hide behind them again. “John, stop,” he commands. “Calm down.”

But John doesn’t calm down, he can’t calm down, and so Sherlock reaches over and kisses him on the cheek, softly. “I wanted that,” Sherlock stresses each word carefully, so that John can understand. “It was everything that I’ve always imagined it would be. It was perfect. It felt good. You made me feel so good. I want you to make me feel like that again.”

Christ, no. He can’t. He can’t.

“No, Sherlock,” he whimpers. “No, we can’t. I can’t—”

“And I want to make you feel that good, too,” Sherlock interrupts him, sliding back against John once more, pressing the man up against the wall again. John doesn’t even try to fight him this time. “You didn’t finish,” Sherlock’s voice rumbles over John, deep and slow. “I want to fix that.” He manoeuvres John so that the man’s body is twisted to face him again, one leg stretched out completely along the cushion of the booth seat so that he is resting his thigh on the plush vinyl with his other leg dangling over the chair, foot still on the floor. It leaves his groin decidedly open. John is still hard, surprisingly, and Sherlock crawls halfway on top of him in the small space of the booth so that he can slip a leg of his own between John’s, pressing his thigh against John’s erection.

A white hot blaze of arousal shoots through John’s body, making his skin tingle. “Oh, God.”

Sherlock moves against him silently and John brings his hands up to cling to the boy desperately, his hips jerking into Sherlock’s body of their own volition. Sherlock thrusts above him awkwardly, and the part of John’s mind that is very aware of how strange and wrong this whole situation is realises that Sherlock doesn’t exactly seem to know what he is doing. But John is so turned on by the whole ordeal that it doesn’t matter. He pushes his hips hard and fast against Sherlock and before long he can feel his orgasm build to a crescendo and crash over him.

John bites his lips to keep from moaning into the late-night silence of the coffee shop around them. Empty or not, he knows there is a half-asleep barista in the backroom somewhere, and John doesn’t want to draw her attention. He takes a moment to recover, heaving deep breaths as his heart rate slowly returns to normal. When he is aware of his surroundings again he can feel Sherlock pressing sweetly against his body, not moving now, simply just holding him. Sherlock’s face is buried in the crook of his neck once more and John spares a moment to enjoy the feel of Sherlock against him, soft and pliant and so, so good.

God, what is he doing? What is happening to him? He shouldn’t be here; he shouldn’t be holding his student this way, pressing against him like this, grasping him so closely. He shouldn’t be doing any of this. He knows this. And yet he knows that he can’t stop, either. He wonders why he can’t ever seem to think straight when Sherlock is around him. It feels like all of his strength and all of
his resolve where Sherlock is concerned go up in flames as soon as John comes near him. It feels like he never had any to begin with, when Sherlock is involved.

“Jesus,” John whispers into Sherlock’s hair. “I just assaulted you. I assaulted you.”

Sherlock chuckles softly against the sensitive skin of John’s neck and the sound makes his flesh vibrate. “Nonsense. If anything, I assaulted you.”

John frowns but neither one lets go of the other. His arms are still wrapped around Sherlock and his mind can’t seem to comprehend what it’s supposed to be doing when his mouth is saying one thing and his body is doing something else. “It’s not funny, Sherlock,” he says, and his tone is reprimanding. “This isn’t a joke!”

Sherlock pulls his face away from John’s neck to look at him suddenly, and John can see that the boy is taking the severity of this situation to heart. His eyes are clear and focused and there is a small frown furrowing the smooth skin between his thick eyebrows. “No, you’re right,” Sherlock agrees. “This is very serious. I want this to be very serious. I want to do this again, John. I want you again.”

“Sherlock!” John says in exasperation, and he finally manages to coerce his body into letting the teen go, pushing him gently up and away, letting him sit on his own. John straightens up and tries to put his clothing to rights. The two of them are sporting rather embarrassing-looking stains on their trousers and the bottoms of their shirts, but it really can’t be helped.

He can’t believe that Sherlock is serious about doing this again. The kid is barmy, he’s lost his mind. He’s got some sort of sick, twisted wish to see John’s head explode from the sheer frustration of all of this. That must be what it is, because John can’t think of a single solitary reason that Sherlock would want to continue this.

“This wasn’t just a quick fumble for me,” Sherlock says suddenly, as if he has read John’s mind. “I was telling you the truth when I said that I like you. A lot. You’re the first person—the only person—who has ever treated me the way you do, who has ever…who has ever made me feel good about myself.” He pauses and stares at John for a moment, gaze hard and steely as if willing John to try to argue with him on that point. John doesn’t; he just simply swallows and licks his dry lips.

“How can something like that be wrong, John?” Sherlock asks on a whisper, and it sounds almost like he is pleading with the older man.

“Because, Sherlock,” John says desperately, turning towards him. “Because you’re just a kid.”

“You know I’m not,” Sherlock states clearly, frowning at John. “I’m sixteen. You know that. What else? What other excuse are you going to try to use?”

John stares at him for a moment, so dumbfounded that his mouth hangs open slightly. “How about the fact that I’m your bloody teacher? How about the fact that I’m married!?” he practically shouts at the him. John can’t believe that Sherlock thinks that he is blindly throwing out facts in hopes of finding one that can stick. It’s ridiculous. All of these are perfectly legitimate reasons to call this whole thing off, to stop it at once. But Sherlock breaks down each one in that way of his, shattering all pretexts of reason into a million pieces.

If Sherlock hears the first reason, he chooses to conveniently ignore it. “To a wife who doesn’t love you anymore, and who cheats on you,” he responds simply to the latter of John’s reasons, as if it’s not even worth his time to go into any more detail on that particular point. “I won’t treat you
like that. I’ll…I’ll be so good to you. I’ll be everything that you want. I promise.”

This is completely ridiculous. He can’t believe that Sherlock is sitting here next to him—after what they have just done—trying to play at being a grown up with him. He can’t believe that he hasn’t just got up and left already.

“No,” John says with a shake of his head. “No. You can’t, you don’t understand, you’re just a kid. God, Sherlock, I could lose my job, my career, my marriage! I could go to prison.”

But Sherlock will not give up so easily. “I can understand. I do,” he argues, and his voice is plaintive. He shuffles closer to John on the seat, reaching out to grab John’s shirt desperately, as if afraid that he’ll do a runner. “I understand more than you always seem to think that I do. Please don’t,” Sherlock stumbles over his words but forgives, unashamed. “Please don’t leave me. I can’t go back to being alone, John. I can’t. Please don’t do that to me,” his voice cracks wetly and his fingers tighten their grip in John’s shirt.

John stares wide-eyed at the boy in front of him. He had thought that Sherlock had been on the verge of tears earlier, when John was rejecting the confession of his feelings, but now he looks simply wrecked. His hair is a frizzy mess from where John had rubbed his face into it and there are dark splotches of colour on his cheekbones as he tries to keep his emotions in check. Those beautiful eyes that John has always loved so much are shining a bit too brightly in the light of the coffee shop and he looks like he is seconds away from tears.

Sherlock looks scared and lonely and so completely heartbroken.

The thought hurts John, somewhere deep in his chest that he hasn’t felt in a long time, and he comes to the sudden and abrupt realisation that he cares about Sherlock far too much to make the boy feel like this. He doesn’t ever want to hurt Sherlock; he doesn’t ever want Sherlock to feel pain. He wants to shelter Sherlock from that for the rest of his life. And right now, he is the one causing Sherlock that pain. It kills him, rips his heart in two. He won’t survive hurting Sherlock like this; he’ll die from the agony of it. So he gives up, gives in, gives himself over to Sherlock completely, finally, irrevocably. He never had a chance against Sherlock Holmes, anyway. He sees that now. He was stupid to think that he ever did. Who has he been trying to fool? He has been fighting a losing battle this whole time, and he is only now beginning to realise that, idiot that he is. One look at Sherlock now, beautiful and sweetly flushed and so close to finally being his, and John can finally admit that he was never going to win this war. He only has so much strength, and he can’t be strong enough for the two of them, not when Sherlock needs him so badly, and John needs him just as much.

Reaching out a shaking hand to pull the teen towards him, John hugs him tightly, crushing Sherlock to him in a desperate hug. “No, Sherlock, I won’t do that to you,” he whispers to the boy, and he can hear his own voice crack. He presses Sherlock’s curly head against his chest, letting Sherlock hear his steady heartbeat, letting him feel the warmth of John’s body. “I won’t leave you. I’ll never do anything like that to you,” he mumbles into the crown of curly hair, inhaling the wonderful scent of Sherlock deeply. “God, I’ve wanted you for so long. You have no idea.”

As he says the words he knows that they are true; they’ve always been true, no matter how hard he had tried to fight them in the past. Finally admitting them out loud eases something in his chest that has been gripping him painfully, something he hasn’t even noticed until the pressure of it begins to lessen, its constricting hold loosening, and John realises that he can breathe finally, for the first time in what seems like far too long.

Sherlock snuggles deeply into his chest, rubbing his face back and forth across John’s button down and hugging the man back just as tightly as he is being held. He lets out a relieved sob that turns

With Sherlock’s arms around him, John feels right for the first time since he can remember. He feels alive, and happy, and worthy of something. For so long, he has felt like he has been fading into nothing, and now Sherlock has come into his life, moving like a storm, like an ocean, like a wildfire—something unstoppable and forceful and wholly larger than John, magnificent and marvellous and wondrous. Something that John can’t fight and John can’t run from. And suddenly John doesn’t feel like he is fading anymore. Sherlock has brought him back, Sherlock has made sense of John’s pitiful, meagre existence. Sherlock has given him something to hope for again, something to look forward to. Sherlock has given him something to crave.

Nothing in his life, John realises with sudden clarity, has ever felt as good or as right as Sherlock does in his arms. Nothing has felt as terrifying, either. Not war, not being shot, not thinking he was going to die.

John tries not to dwell too much on that thought.

They sit there for a few minutes, simply holding one another, getting used to the feel of each other and the new dynamic of their relationship. Because that’s what it is now, no matter how much the thought scares John. A relationship. He has agreed to it.

He must be losing his mind.

“My God, Sherlock,” he says, voice breaking. “What are you doing to me? You’ve turned everything upside down, completely demolished every wall that I tried to put up between us. Being with you is always the most extraordinary experience,” John tells him, his quiet voice filled with awe in the silence of the coffee shop around them. “The way you think, the way you look at the world, the things you do. I barely know you and you’ve already changed my life.” He shakes his head, at a complete loss. “I don’t know how you do it—I don’t know how you make me feel this way. How you make me do things I wouldn’t ever consider doing. Not in a million years.”

Against his chest he can feel Sherlock’s cheeks move in a large, self-satisfied smile. “I’m not doing anything that I know you don’t really want me to, John.”

John doesn’t bother answering him because they both know this is just another time when what Sherlock is saying is the cold, hard truth. So instead John tightens his arms around him and indulges in the weight of Sherlock’s body pressing into his own, reclined back as he is against the corner of the wall with Sherlock lying limply halfway on top of him. It is something that he can finally admit to himself he has wanted, something he has tried so hard not to think about for so long—Sherlock, in his arms; Sherlock, against him; Sherlock, so close to him.

Yes, he’s definitely lost his mind.

“This is the most ridiculous thing I’ve ever done, you know,” John tells him, thinking that Sherlock ought to know this little fact. It’s the truth. Never in all his life would John, always so responsible, always so resolute, always so proud, always so honourable, have considered ever doing anything like this. To his wife, to a student, to himself. But Sherlock is changing all of that, changing him. And he thinks Sherlock should know that.

Sherlock doesn’t seem to mind. John can feel the teen’s smile widen even more against his chest, and when he talks the brush of his lips sends shivers down John’s spine.

“And you invaded Afghanistan.”
When John gets home that night, it is late. He has spent more time at the coffee shop with Sherlock than he originally thought he would, back before his plan to keep things respectable between them had gone to hell. As he enters his house, he goes straight to the bedroom to change and wash up, bypassing the sitting room where Mary is watching telly and trying to pretend that she isn’t annoyed that John keeps staying away from home until so late at night. But if she wants to start an argument, he doesn’t give her the chance. He races up the stairs, still marvelling at the fact that he hasn’t used his cane in weeks and now the peculiar pain is completely gone, not even a twinge as he puts his weight on it and runs up the steps. Sherlock did that, he knows. Sherlock—that strange boy who has completely turned John’s world upside down, who has taken over John’s whole life and torn all of his firm resolution and willpower to shreds.

Sherlock. His sixteen year old pupil.

Sherlock, who he has just had a very inappropriate night with.

Christ.

John stumbles into the bathroom and shuts the door, leaning back against it and locking it for good measure so that Mary won’t inadvertently walk in on him having a break down as he thinks about the fact that he has essentially molested his student tonight.

He knows it doesn’t matter that Sherlock came on to him first; it doesn’t matter that Sherlock has been trying to seduce him for weeks. It doesn’t matter that Sherlock was the first one to be inappropriate and try to make their relationship something that it shouldn’t be. None of that matters. Because Sherlock is immature, and Sherlock is his pupil, and Sherlock has an abusive father, and Sherlock is still so, so young. And John is an adult. John knows the consequences. John knows the risks. John is a teacher who is entrusted to take care of his students, not dry hump them in the booth seat of a coffee shop in the middle of the night.

God, he feels so disgusted with himself. He bangs the back of his head against the door, the noise a dull thud in the quiet bathroom. There is no sound from the bedroom, either. Mary hasn’t come up yet.

It doesn’t calm his nerves that Sherlock had obviously wanted it to happen, that Sherlock had indeed asked for it—begged for it, John’s mind helpfully supplies—and he tries hard not to think about the boy’s lean, lithe body on top of his, rubbing and squirming and panting…

John’s cock threatens to awaken again and he promptly pushes the heels of his hands against his eyes, as if he can try to stop the images that are seared into his brain from coming up that way.

He doesn’t know what came over him, there at the coffee shop. He tries to replay the moment that he lost control and surrendered to his emotions, the moment where he couldn’t stand it anymore and finally gave in. It’s all a bit of a blur, though, he admits. All he can remember is the feeling of wanting, of needing Sherlock, right then and there. Having to take him, to feel Sherlock pressed up against him, close to him. It didn’t matter that they were in the middle of a fucking coffee shop; it didn’t matter that they were in public, where they could easily get caught. So easily. The thought of how simple it would have been for someone to see them makes John sick now, in retrospect. He knows how lucky they were that they weren’t seen, during or afterwards, with their clothes a mess and Sherlock’s hair frizzy and tangled, his cheeks flushed a pretty red from his orgasm. John knows it was stupid of him, so unbelievably stupid and incredibly reckless. Sitting on the cold, hard floor of his loo, thinking back on what happened—away from Sherlock and the overwhelmingly heady feel of him—John can’t believe he did any of that. His mind can’t come to
terms with it. A wave of self-disgust rolls over him, bringing with it a roiling bout of nausea.

He needs a shower. He needs to wash off the evidence of tonight, clean himself up, wipe it all away.

He begins yanking his clothes off, stuffing them to the bottom of the hamper so that Mary won’t see them when she takes the basket to do the laundry. He turns the shower on as hot as it will go and steps under the spray. The dried semen that smeared all over his groin and lower belly when he came inside of his pants is the first thing that he cleans away, hoping he will feel better once the sticky, crusty sensation of it is gone.

He does not.

As he washes, he knows that only one thing will make him feel clean again. Doing it, though, risks the wrath of an immature, unstable, infatuated teenager who could ruin his life. He knows that if he hurts Sherlock there is a high probability that the boy will want retribution for his rejection, and there is nothing stopping him from going to the head teacher, to the school board, to the police, and telling them everything that John has done. Putting a stop to this ridiculousness could very well mean the end of his career (yet again), being labelled as a sexual predator, and being incarcerated. But stopping it before it goes any further is the only logical solution. It is John’s own fault for letting it go this far anyway, and he has never once shied away from the consequences of something he has done that he knows is morally wrong.

He lets the water sluice over him in tiny rivulets, merely luke-warm now that he has stood under the spray for so long. Yes, he thinks, feeling cleaner already, just from having made the decision. Tomorrow. Tomorrow I’ll tell him. Tomorrow will be the end of it.

He hopes that the decision will let him sleep comfortably that night, but as he lies in bed next to his wife, John can’t help tossing and turning and feeling like his heart is being torn in two.

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A/N: I know, I know: they almost had it, they were so close! I’m sorry for being a tease. Sorry, also for the wait between chapters; I will try to make up for it (and for getting your hopes up in this chapter) by posting again maybe before the next week is out :-D Also, if anyone is interested in this sort of thing, I listened to the song This Ends Tonight by The All-American Rejects while finishing up this chapter, and a lot of John's pov towards the end at the coffee shop was inspired by lines from the song Bring to Life by We As Human
The next morning John is nervous as he drives to work. He hasn’t done anything yet that might have made Sherlock angry with him, but a completely irrational part of his brain can’t help thinking that someone knows what John did with him last night. That they weren’t actually alone in the coffee shop like John thought they were. He can’t stop worrying that maybe someone saw them, that someone has found out about everything and that there will be an army of police officers waiting at the school to arrest him, as well as every major news network he can think of and all of the people who live in this God-forsaken city.

He thinks he may throw up.

The logical part of John’s mind knows better. He knows that none of what he thinks will happen, none of what he fears, is really the way things would play out if he were to get caught. He knows how situations like this are actually handled on school property. Quietly, with little attention drawn to them. Shamefully. However, that doesn’t stop his brain from picturing all sorts of public, disgraceful, embarrassing scenarios.

The feeling of nausea only slightly subsides as he makes his way through the school anxiously, heading straight for his classroom. Some of his fellow teachers nod “good mornings” and smile at him, every single person none the wiser about what he has done with one of his pupils last night.

As the day goes on and the police don’t burst through his door with a battering ram and a warrant for his arrest, John begins to feel a little bit better. He still cannot concentrate on his lessons and just decides to give up trying after his third class, letting the students have a make-up day for any work or exams they have missed.

He is eternally grateful that he does not have Sherlock’s class today. Since John won’t see him at school, he sends off a text asking Sherlock to meet him at the coffee shop late that night. He figures that if Sherlock is going to make a scene, it would be better for him to do it in a potentially empty coffee house, with no likelihood for witnesses except for the lazy barista who always sleeps in the backroom.

For the first time since he has moved to this city, John leaves school as soon as the bell rings for the end of the day. He doesn’t want to stay around there for a second longer—he feels as though every teacher he sees can tell what he is guilty of. It means he will have to spend more time ignoring Mary at home, but he thinks that is a fair trade-off if he doesn’t have to feel this overwhelming sense of paranoia any longer.
Dinner is unusually quiet, even for the two of them. John knows that Mary may think something is wrong when they don’t have their nightly domestic, but John can’t really be arsed to care about his wife at all as he waits for ten o’clock to roll around, his stomach tightening into knots. He has a drink with dinner, hoping it will calm his nerves and that it will be mostly out of his system by the time he has to drive to the coffee shop to meet Sherlock. John hasn’t been this anxious since the last time he was sent out on a raid in the Army, when he got shot and very nearly died, and the irony is not lost on him that it is a sixteen year old boy that is making him feel this way.

When he tells Mary that he is leaving, she makes a comment about the time but John isn’t paying much attention. He responds to her and it must be a somewhat believable excuse because she doesn’t say anything else to him, only glares as he gathers up his coat and his keys and leaves the house. His leg aches and a small stab of pain clenches at the muscle of his thigh, and he thinks briefly about grabbing his cane, as well, but doesn’t. No doubt Sherlock will take one look at it and know what John is planning to do tonight.

The drive downtown takes forever and yet not long enough. As John pulls up and parks by the kerb in front of the coffee shop he has a moment of weakness where he tells himself that he doesn’t have to do this. He can just go inside and meet with Sherlock like they do almost every night and nothing will be different except for the fact that he can touch Sherlock’s hand now and not feel guilty, he can lean over and kiss Sherlock’s lips like he has not allowed himself to think about doing so many times in the past. John can sit next to him, so closely, and take Sherlock into his arms, hold him and feel his steady heartbeat through his own chest. John aches with want for all of that. Now that he knows what it feels like to do those things, to have Sherlock, it makes it so much harder to give them up. He knows he has to, though. His reckless, dangerous behaviour the previous night proved it. Still, the memory of Sherlock on top of him is so heady, so strong, that it pulls at John’s will yet again and makes his determination waver for another moment. A small, dark voice in the back of his head reminds him that this is what he wanted, and he has it now, and he can very easily keep it.

John sighs and turns off his car, rubbing his hands across his face, knowing that he can’t do that. He has made his decision and it is the right one, the moral one. He will go through in ending this ludicrous relationship with Sherlock Holmes, and he will take whatever the consequences are like a man.

The bell attached to the door rings loudly as he walks into the shop. The barista doesn’t even come out of the back room, no doubt knowing that since Sherlock is already here, the only other patron tonight will be John. As he walks to their little table in the back corner of the building, John sees that Sherlock has already ordered a tea for him and he knows that the shop-girl won’t be coming out to the counter for a while. As usual, they are essentially alone.

Sherlock is sitting in John’s regular seat, facing the doorway. When he hears John near the table, he looks up from the book he is reading and his face lights up with joy when his eyes land on John.

John’s heart clenches and his stomach drops to his feet. Sherlock is so beautiful in the dim, off-coloured lighting of the shop, skin pale and hair dark and eyes shining. He looks happier than John can ever remember seeing him and John’s traitorous mind thinks, That’s for you. You did that. And now you’re going to hurt him.

He hates himself for what he is about to do—God knows he doesn’t want to do it, he doesn’t want to be the one to wipe that rare, sweet smile off of Sherlock’s gorgeous face—but he has to, he has to. He’ll never be able to live with himself if he doesn’t.

“Hello,” Sherlock says once John is at the table. His voice is low and bashful, and there is a small
blush that is creeping cutely across his pale cheeks. The smile on his full lips has turned distinctly shy.

John opens his mouth to say hello back, to ease into this conversation somewhat, but once he speaks he can’t help but blurt out, “Sherlock, we can’t do this.”

The smile instantly leaves Sherlock’s lips and the happiness that lit his eyes extinguishes in a second, as if it was never there. He looks cold now, aloof. The mask that John has come to learn Sherlock dons when he wants to protect himself from the world is in place. He suddenly seems distant to John, in a way he hasn’t for weeks now.

Sherlock stares up at him as John stands by the side of the table, not even having sat down before he opened his mouth. His eyes—green and alien in the yellowish, dim light of the coffee shop—cut into John in that way that leaves the man feeling flayed open, exposed. “You’re having some sort of moral crisis over what happened last night,” Sherlock says slowly, voice and gaze both steady. “Even though I assured you it was what I wanted, and you told me that you were okay with it as well.”

John licks his lips nervously, knowing that at any moment Sherlock can start yelling and screaming about rape, and John’s life could be over in between one breath and the next. “Yes,” he answers, and his voice is just as even as Sherlock’s own, his gaze just as steady.

“But you didn’t lie to me last night when you finally gave in to me,” Sherlock continues, not missing a beat, and John simply stands there and lets the teen deduce him once again, possibly for the last time; if John is going to have one last image of Sherlock in his mind, he wants it to be of the boy being amazing in that brilliant way of his. “You want me. Intensely. Yet some simplistic part of you still believes that what you’re doing is wrong. That you will get caught and get in trouble over it. That you will end up hurting me.”

John will never stop being astonished by how perceptive Sherlock truly is. He will miss this, he knows. He’ll miss it terribly. Miss everything about Sherlock. From the sound of his voice to the way Sherlock makes him feel.

He has to wait a moment to speak to be sure his voice doesn’t crack. “Yes.”

Sherlock sighs and for the first time he turns away from John, a look of confused sadness crinkling his smooth brow and the corners of his mouth. “I don’t understand,” he says, voice plaintive. “If you want this, why are you denying yourself? If this will make you happy in a way that you haven’t been in years, why are you telling me no?”

John simply shakes his head, steeling his resolve. He doesn’t allow himself to think about how sad Sherlock looks, how lonely. John doesn’t allow himself to think about the fact that this is something that he wants, desperately, more than he’s ever wanted anything in his whole life. He doesn’t think about how this is something that he needs, deep inside of him, where he feels a spark that he hasn’t felt in years. A spark he thought he’d never feel again. A spark that’s been smothered, trampled on, and extinguished over and over again for so long, since even before Mary and most definitely after her. He’s always been dutiful, decent John Watson, constantly doing what is best for his family, for his mum and his sister, for his future, for his wife.

No, he reminds himself that this is wrong—so very wrong—and that this will only end up hurting Sherlock, and himself, in the end. He knows he has to put out this spark before it turns into a wildfire. Before it burns them both alive.

“I don’t expect you to understand, Sherlock. I—” he stumbles over his words, searching for the
right ones, trying to explain himself. It seems hopeless, though. How can Sherlock know what it feels like to be beaten down by life, to have so much taken from him? How can a child like Sherlock understand? “I’ve lost so much of myself over the past couple of years,” John says, trying not to sound as pathetic as he feels, though he doubts he succeeds. “All I have left are my morals, and my pride, and my sense of right and wrong. If I let you take that from me, I’ll have nothing left.” He takes a shuddering breath as he stands beside the table, fighting to keep staring Sherlock in the face with a sense of dignity that he barely feels. “I really will be a disgrace, then.”

Sherlock looks as if John has just slapped him. His eyes go wide and his mouth drops open just a tiny bit in surprise. “I don’t want to take any of those things from you!” he exclaims, as if he is astonished that John can think that. “Those things are the best parts of you. But you deserve to be happy. You’re too good a man to spend the rest of your life not getting what you want, what you deserve,” Sherlock tells him adamantly. “You are selfless and strong in ways that I will never be able to understand. Ways that make you honourable and good and loyal. Ways that mean you can take hit after hit and still have the fortitude to do the right thing, even if that thing hurts you. That’s why you’re still with your wife. That’s why you think you have to leave me alone. But you don’t, John,” Sherlock says, shaking his head and looking imploringly at the man, placing both hands on the table and leaning forward. “You don’t have to do either of those things. You can have everything that you want. You can be happy. I can make you that way.”

John closes his eyes and shakes his head, wishing he could un-hear everything that Sherlock has told him. It makes his heart ache. “Sherlock, please,” he pleads, and his voice is nothing more than a whisper. “Just let me walk away from this. I’m begging you.”

“I’m not making you stay, John. If you really want to leave, all you have to do is turn around and walk right out that door.” Sherlock’s voice is still so calm, the sound of reason, and John is transfixed by it, by the deep timbre coming out of such a young body. “If you do, I promise that I won’t text you again, I won’t talk to you at school. I won’t go to the head teacher, or the administration board, or the police. I’ll leave you alone,” he stresses. John opens his eyes and looks at him, separated from each other by the table between them, and it is clear that Sherlock’s voice is calm and rational but the emotions on his face are something else entirely. “If that’s what you really want.”

Yes. Yes, it is what I want, John thinks frantically. It is everything that he wants and so much more. It is an out. It is a “get out of jail free” card. It is the perfect excuse to let him walk away from this and go back to his life and not have to face the consequences. Sherlock will ignore him and in return John will leave him alone. Completely alone.

It is what he wants.

So why isn’t he turning around and walking away? Why is his heart pounding so fast in his chest? Why is his body sliding down into the chair next to Sherlock, no longer able to hold him up? He rests his elbows on the table and buries his face in his hands, completely and utterly lost.

He had it. He could have left. Why hadn’t he left?

Beside him he feels Sherlock stirring, and then there is a large, warm hand on his, pulling it away from his face. “Everybody wants a flame in their life, John, but nobody ever wants to risk getting burned,” Sherlock tells him, voice soft and soothing, and John wants to laugh at the fact that this impetuous child at the table with him is being the reasonable one. “This is okay, I promise. I’ve already told you how I feel. That hasn’t changed. I want us to do this. I need it. I need you. I need you to save me, John. Because I can’t do this on my own. I can’t live this life without you there to protect me, to make it better. I know that you’re feeling guilty but, truthfully, underneath it
all, you don’t seem all that ashamed to me, otherwise you would have left.” He looks John in the eye, unblinkingly, his stare deep and meaningful and intense. “I’m not scared of this, and there’s no reason that you should be, either.”

“Sherlock, God, I can’t!” John cries out unexpectedly. He wants it to mean that he can’t do this, he can’t stay, he can’t live with himself if he gives in. What he knows it really means, though, is that he can’t leave.

Sherlock seems to know this, too, because he takes that moment to throw his arms around John, and the man grabs him, pulls him close, holds him tight. Sherlock feels so good in his arms, so right, just like John remembers. He can’t ever imagine letting Sherlock go; he can’t believe he had wanted to.

He buries his nose in Sherlock’s soft, curly hair, breathing him in. “You’re trouble, Sherlock Holmes,” John whispers into the unruly locks with a diffident laugh. He can smell the whisky on his breath from earlier as he releases little puffs of air into the crown of Sherlock’s head, but underneath that is the soft scent of the brunet’s shampoo, of something completely Sherlock. It relaxes him, makes him feel safe. “You’re so much trouble and I have no idea why I can’t let you go.” John’s arms tighten around him, even as he knows that they shouldn’t.

Sherlock returns the hug without any uncertainty. “Then don’t, John,” he says into the man’s neck, lips brushing against the sensitive skin above the collar of John’s shirt. “Don’t let me go. Keep me forever. Tell me you want me, John. Tell me.” His voice cracks and breaks and something in John’s chest throbs.

He doesn’t even hesitate, doesn’t think twice. It’s like pulling the trigger of a loaded gun—powerful, natural, dangerous, addicting, liberating.

“I want you, Sherlock,” John tells him. John will tell him as many times as Sherlock wants him to. “I need you. I won’t be able to live my life without you. It’d be dull and empty if you’re not here with me. I’ll keep you here with me, always,” he whispers into the crown of Sherlock’s dark head.

The previous day had been the first time he had admitted wanting Sherlock, but John knows that—now that he has said the words—they won’t simply lie dormant inside of him. After all this time of fighting his feelings, he acknowledges that he has wanted Sherlock for so long; he has wanted to hold him just like this, and kiss him, and keep him. John has wanted Sherlock in ways he has barely allowed himself to think about before now, ways that feel simultaneously wrong and so, so right.

They stay that way, holding each other tightly and breathing one another in until John decides that he can’t stay out any later and he reluctantly pulls away from the Sherlock. Before he leaves, John takes one last look at him and reaches out a tentative hand to brush his index finger whisper-soft against the boy’s cheek. Sherlock’s eyes slide closed and he leans his head into John’s touch infinitesimally. John draws in a shaky breath and drops his hand before he does anything else, positive he won’t be able to control himself if he lets his touch linger. The last thing he needs is a repeat of yesterday. If this is going to work, he knows that he will have to be stronger, he will have to be better. He needs to be, now. Both his and Sherlock’s safety depend on it.

“I’ll see you tomorrow,” he says, and tries to pretend not to notice that his voice is a tad huskier and wavering slightly.

Sherlock, luckily, decides to be altruistic and says nothing about it, either. Instead, he asks John, “Will you still want me?” His voice sounds cautious and more than a little surly, already on the defensive. John knows what he is really asking is ‘will you stay with me?’ As much as Sherlock tries to hide it, John knows that the thought of being left by someone else in his life hurts Sherlock
John smiles at him reassuringly, the edges of it tipped with sadness and remorse, ashamed that his actions have already caused Sherlock to doubt John and himself. “Always,” he answers Sherlock’s question without thinking, a searing promise burning between them. John wants to regret it as soon as the words are out of his mouth, knowing that it’s too much too soon, but finds that he can’t. The answer is true, and he knows it. He has always wanted Sherlock, from the days when he first started getting to know him better, and he will always want Sherlock, no matter what happens between them.

Besides, Sherlock’s bright smile beaming up at him is completely worth his slip of the tongue.

When John gets home that night, he has no trouble falling asleep.

* 

Wednesday is completely different from the previous day. John gets up in the morning and feels refreshed, rejuvenated. Happy. It has been so long since he has woken up in such a cheerful mood that it takes him a few minutes to recognise the feeling. He practically jumps out of bed and hums as he gets ready for work, a huge grin on his face the entire time. When Mary notices his attitude and asks him what he is so pleased about, he gives her some excuse about it being an exam day at school so he doesn’t have to give any lessons.

When he gets to work, his good mood hasn’t diminished at all. In fact, just the thought of being able to see Sherlock later on in the day sends his good spirits soaring. Every teacher that he passes in the corridors mentions his soppy grin, his limp-free leg, his infectious mood. When Sherlock’s time block finally comes around, the teen has texted John so much that he has had to turn his mobile on silent so that it doesn’t keep disturbing his lessons, but John can’t be mad at him. He has responded to each one happily, even going so far as to flirt with Sherlock slightly over the messages, something he had been very careful to avoid doing in all the months that they have been talking.

But now that John can, it feels good to do so. It makes him feel like an infatuated teenager himself, young and happier than he can ever remember being. The guilt that had plagued him the day before seems a million miles away now, and he can’t believe that he had been a hair’s breadth away from giving all of this up.

It’s unthinkable, now that he knows what he would be missing. To never feel this way again would be unbearable. To have this happiness ripped away from him now would be like getting shot all over again.

When Sherlock’s class comes in, John has to try very hard not to grin like a loon or blush like some sodding teenage girl. John makes a point to never look him directly in the eye and Sherlock, thankfully, does not cause a scene in class by arguing with John over some pointless piece of information in the man’s lesson plan, as he has done before in the past.

They have a nice, calm, peaceful lesson and by the end of it, no one is any wiser about what their teacher is doing with one of their fellow classmates. As the class files out and the day ends, John’s grin only grows when he thinks that this—this relationship he is trying to have with Sherlock—is something that has become doable. They can hide it, they can keep it secret. He is sure of that.

* 

When he goes to see Sherlock at the coffee shop later that night, he is nervous. It is the first time
that they will meet as—he stops, drawing a blank as he searches for a word to describe them.

As what? Boyfriends? (He quickly tosses that term; he feels far too old to have anything remotely close to being considered a boyfriend.) Lovers? (That doesn’t sound right, either.) Friends with benefits? (He makes a face. Most certainly not.)

He finally settles on the word “more”, because that’s all he can think of to describe them. It is the first time that they will meet as *more* than just friends, *more* than just a student and a teacher, and the thought makes a barrage of butterflies erupt in his stomach.

When John slides into his seat across from Sherlock, he is looking at John strangely, his face guarded in a way it wasn’t last night when John had first walked into the shop. It is understandable, though, considering that John had tried to end things before they had even started yesterday. He knows Sherlock is probably still on the lookout for any signs of the same thing tonight. John doesn’t want his good mood spoiled by Sherlock’s worries, though—plus, the brunet looks far more beautiful when he smiles—and so John reaches a tentative hand out to where Sherlock’s own disproportionately large one lies on the tabletop, resting between his double espresso and his chemistry textbook.

It is strange, doing something as small as touching Sherlock’s hand and feeling a rush of warmth and happiness wash over him. He smiles widely at Sherlock and the boy blushes suddenly, turning away from John and biting his lip, letting John know that he has felt something similar as well. Neither of them say anything. John, for the life of him, doesn’t know what to say to a pupil who he is now seeing in a romantic capacity, and he thinks Sherlock might feel the same way about him. So they simply sit there for a little while in a silence that slowly grows more uncomfortable with each passing moment, in a way that they have never felt around each other before. Sherlock, pretending to ignore it, turns back to the homework he has splayed out across the table and doesn’t look at John. He does leave his hand where it is at on the flat surface of the wood, though, still underneath John’s calloused, slightly smaller one.

John knows that the awkwardness can’t just be ignored, though. Now that they are alone together, he can feel that things have changed between them, their dynamic has shifted, and while he knew that it was inevitable, he still hates it. It is as if they are somewhat afraid of one another now, after everything that’s happened, because they don’t want to scare the other off. They both want this too much and it is causing tension where there has never been any before.

John thinks he knows where part of the problem lies, however.

“Sherlock, what happened on Monday night,” he begins uneasily, licking his lips. He takes a moment to think about his words, because he doesn’t want to offend the boy or make Sherlock mad at him. But he has to know, for his own peace of mind. “Have you ever…done anything like that before?” John asks cautiously.

Sherlock looks up from his homework to give him a brief, inquiring glance. “No,” he says simply, going back to his papers immediately.

“Oh,” John says, surprised. He sort of expected it in a way—he remembers how awkwardly Sherlock had moved against him the other day, how he had never tried to properly kiss John—but still, hearing it confirmed gives John a fluttery feeling in the pit of his stomach that is threatening to grow into something more. “Have you done…other things?” he asks uncomfortably. “Less…intimate things?”

Not even looking up from his paper this time, Sherlock tells him crossly, “John, you’re being vague and tedious. Just ask what you want to ask.”
John blushes—he hadn’t wanted to be so blunt—but complies. “Have you ever kissed anyone?” he asks frankly.

Sherlock continues to scribble out an answer for a question about copper sulphate. “No,” he says, not even pausing in his writing.

The fluttery feeling in his stomach grows and John is slightly taken aback by Sherlock’s answer. He had thought for sure that a teenager of Sherlock’s physical appearance would have no problems finding willing girls—or boys—to experiment with. “No? Not even on the cheek or anything?”

“No, you were the first,” Sherlock says off-handedly, as if it isn’t a big deal. “I’ve never done anything having to do with…” he makes a vague hand gesture without looking up from his paper, “that.”

“So you’ve never touched anyone, never been kissed by someone?” John continues to prod. “Never even held anyone’s hand?”

Sherlock sighs in frustration and throws down his biro, clearly annoyed that John isn’t letting this go. “No, John.” He stresses the word “no” like it will make John realise it is the truth if he puts more emphasis on it. “How many times must I say it for you to believe that it’s true?”

John just ogles him in astonishment. “I’m sorry, I just find that hard to believe. And incredible.” The last part slips out of his mouth before he can stop it.

Sherlock’s light green eyes narrow as he looks at the man sitting across the table from him. “Incredible? Why is it incredible?” he asks suspiciously.

John flushes deeply, can feel the heat creeping into his cheeks and all the way up to his ears. He can’t take back the words once they have been said, though, and he knows Sherlock will never let the issue go now that he’s been intrigued by it. “Well,” he starts uneasily, “it’s, er…a bit of a turn on, honestly.”

A look of surprise crosses Sherlock’s face. “Really?”

John lets out a nervous, embarrassed chuckle and brings a hand up to rub at the back of his neck, looking away from Sherlock’s piercing eyes boring into him. “Yeah,” he tells Sherlock truthfully.

Instead of asking more questions, however, Sherlock simply considers him for a quick moment before making an intrigued noise in the back of his throat. Then he picks up his biro again and continues working on his paper. “Virginity kink,” he says out loud, though it’s not necessarily aimed at John. “Interesting.”

At that, John flushes even deeper and lets out an affronted sound. “Oi, it’s not a ‘kink’!” he tries to argue, but they both know better than to assume that Sherlock is anything but correct.

Sherlock doesn’t even pause in his writing to give John a second consideration. “Yes, it is.”

John grumbles slightly under his breath before he decides to just let it go. He spends a few moments silently watching Sherlock work, dark head bent low over his paper in concentration. Sherlock’s skin is so pale and smooth that John’s fingers twitch with the desire to reach out and touch him, run the tips across Sherlock’s cheekbone and down the soft skin of his neck. He wants to dip his fingers into the open collar of the button down shirt Sherlock is currently wearing and feel the bones of his clavicle, press kisses to his sternum. He wets his lips and realises that his mouth has gone dry.
“Can I…can I teach you, then?” he asks softly, and he doesn’t understand why he is so nervous.

This catches Sherlock’s attention once again. He stops writing and looks up at John, frowning. “Teach me?” he asks, as if he doesn’t understand what John is saying.

“How to…” John stumbles over his words and blushes like a teenager. “How to kiss,” he says with a comforting smile.

“Oh,” Sherlock says, staring at John with wide eyes. He is quiet for a moment, as if considering something, and then, “Of course. I look forward to that. Immensely.”

He looks like he is going to continue writing again so John speaks before Sherlock goes back to what he is doing. “How about now?” John asks, hopeful.

“What?”

“We do it now?”

“Oh,” Sherlock says again, and this time it is he who blushes, and John thinks that the teen looks pretty with his cheeks delightfully red. It reminds John of the flush on Sherlock’s skin after he orgasmed. “Yes,” Sherlock manages, but the word catches in his throat so he swallows and tries again. “Yes, I suppose we can.”

The tingles break out along John’s skin and in his stomach once again, and he can’t keep the goofy, wide grin off of his face. He slides over to the chair next to Sherlock’s and scoots it closer to him, so that their knees are slotted against each other, one of John’s between Sherlock’s thighs and one of Sherlock’s between John’s. It brings them as close as they can be in two separate chairs.

As usual, the coffee shop was empty when he came in earlier, and the annoying little bell that is attached to the door has not rung at all since he sat down at the back of the shop, at their normal table. John knows that only the barista is in the building with them, and she had disappeared into the back room some time ago. There is no fear of someone catching them together, so John takes the opportunity to savour the moment. He reaches out both hands to gently clasp Sherlock’s face along his cheeks and indulges in the desire he had earlier. John lets the soft pads of his thumbs sweep across Sherlock’s smooth cheekbones while his middle fingers caress the sensitive patch of skin right in front of Sherlock’s earlobes on either side of his head.

Sherlock lets out a small, shaky breath and closes his eyes against the feel of John’s touch. John discovers that if he can’t see the beautiful, ethereal colour of Sherlock’s irises then there is no point in having his eyes open either. He closes them and leans forward slowly until his lips are softly touching Sherlock’s.

It is the first time they have kissed and Sherlock’s mouth is motionless against his, unsure and hesitant. John moves his lips against the soft feel of Sherlock and uses his hands on the side of the boy’s face to tilt Sherlock’s head up slightly, to give John a more comfortable angle. Sherlock is completely pliant in his grasp, allowing him to do anything. John keeps the kiss close-mouthed for now because he knows that too much too soon will do nothing but overwhelm Sherlock. So when he decides to draw out the kiss and lets his lips linger on Sherlock’s, he sticks to soft, light, barely-there kisses that are so sweet John feels like he wants to drown in them forever.

He slowly begins to feel Sherlock respond against him, moving his own lips in a mimicry of John’s movements. It is slightly awkward at first, but John presses his mouth a little harder against Sherlock’s and the boy lets out a small, helpless moan. John is completely lost in the sensation of
the brunet’s soft, full lips against his own thinner ones. They fit together so perfectly that John doesn’t ever want to stop, but he knows that Sherlock must be getting short of breath—if he’s never kissed anyone before then he must not know how to breathe steadily through the nose while snogging. It is a trick John can’t wait to show him.

He gentles the press of their lips in increments, wanting to draw out the ending, and Sherlock tries to follow his lead. It is somewhat awkward-feeling as they try to match each other’s pace—Sherlock is still pressing too hard while John is trying to show him how to ease up so that the kiss doesn’t end abruptly—but neither one seems to mind too much.

They finally slow to a natural-feeling halt and John pulls his lips away just far enough so that their mouths are no longer touching but they are still sharing the same breath. He rests his forehead against Sherlock’s and lets their noses rub together, savouring the moment.

John thinks that he has never had a better first kiss in all of his life.

His fingers move to card through the hair that surrounds Sherlock’s ears and he lets a grin break out onto his face, knowing Sherlock will be able to feel the smile against his skin. He takes a deep breath with his eyes still closed, delighting in the scent of Sherlock, and hums happily. “That’s good for now,” he whispers as he slowly moves back in his seat, opening his eyes to see Sherlock’s face completely flushed. Sherlock’s gaze refuses to meet his own.

“Yes,” Sherlock agrees, his voice cracking. He runs his tongue along his full, blood-flushed bottom lip, as if remembering the feel of John’s kiss, and clears his throat, turning back to his homework quickly. “Good,” he repeats, and John can’t help it; he laughs happily at Sherlock, feeling giddy.

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A/N: Picture used for this chapter comes from this website:

http://www.sofeminine.co.uk/news-celebrities/benedict-cumberbatch-fans-rejoice-new-sherlock-series-3-image-is-released-s201003.html
The first time Sherlock invites John over to his house one day after school, instead of wanting to meet at the coffee shop like usual, John thinks the kid has lost his bleeding mind. He comes to John at the end of the day when the classroom is empty, and John can’t even begin to comprehend why Sherlock thinks it is a good idea.

“What the hell, Sherlock?” John asks. His voice is loud and uncontrolled because there is no one in his classroom, the door is firmly closed, and the idea is simply so ridiculous that he doesn’t know what else to say to it.

“It’s quite all right, I assure you,” Sherlock tells him though, voice calm and soothing. “My father is prone to days-long drinking binges where he doesn’t come home at all. When he leaves, he is always gone for at least four days and he only stumbles in during the middle of the night, after the pubs have all closed.”

John is still on the verge of saying no, he swears he is, when Sherlock goes for the final blow:

“Besides,” he says, looking at John with an innocence that is too practised to be sincere, “you wouldn’t want to keep meeting at the coffee house and risk getting caught, now would you?”

John doesn’t know why he ends up letting Sherlock coerce him into going to the boy’s house after that stunt, but before he knows it—and completely against John’s better judgment—he agrees. Sherlock walks a few blocks away from the school and John pulls over to let him into the car. They have a tense ride for several long minutes, John thinking the entire time that this is quite possibly the stupidest thing he has ever done, yet not understanding why he can’t ever seem to tell Sherlock “no”. Again there is that sense of reckless abandon, that burning need for Sherlock overtaking all common sense in John’s mind. He doesn’t understand it. He just knows that he can’t stop himself from giving in to it, no matter how hard he tries to be reasonable, and good, and moral.

Sometime later, John pulls into the driveway of Sherlock’s house and the teen points out to him that his father’s car is gone, as if to reassure him. John takes a moment to shoot off some ridiculous story about working late at the school in a text to Mary before he warily lets Sherlock drag him inside.
Sherlock’s house is dark, and dusty, and smells of stale beer with a slight hint of old cigarette smoke. There are family pictures of much younger children (none, interestingly enough, have the two brothers standing together) that are covered in a thin layer of dust and look like they haven’t been touched in years. Along with the photographs, all manner of eclectic decorations are hung on the walls and scattered about. There is mess and clutter everywhere, books mostly, along with stacks of old newspapers and things that look like they may have been alive once but are now just cleaned and bleached bone.

Sherlock leads John through the entryway and down the hall without a word, taking him through a door and into what appears to be a kitchen, but he can’t be quite sure. There are various household chemicals—and some decidedly not so household—sitting along every inch of available space on the worktop in this room, and John can see piles of a wide assortment of take away menus scattered about. A handful of expensive-looking contraptions that seem to belong in a laboratory somewhere (and not in a person’s kitchen) sit on top of something that he thinks might be a table, if he were able to see it clearly, and piles of post cover any leftover space, some envelopes open while others are not.

They only linger in this room for a moment, though, before Sherlock is pulling John along out another door and down a different hallway, this one leading to a room that John instantly knows belongs to the teen.

It is surprisingly clean and mostly uncluttered when compared to the rest of the house that John has seen. Sherlock left his blinds open that morning before leaving for school, so the bright light of the afternoon sun shines through and sets everything aglow. There is no dust in this room, and everything looks decidedly lived in and well-worn, yet tenderly taken care of. There are more pieces of scientific equipment set up along a desk to one side of the room, and the only real clutter comes from an alarmingly large number of books and notepads scattered around. The pages of these notepads are all completely filled with what John recognises from class assignments as Sherlock’s spidery, cramped handwriting. Some of the journals even have extra pages shoved into them haphazardly. The strange, eclectic decorations continue in here, as well. Hanging on one wall is a bison skull wearing a pair of rather expensive-looking headphones that aren’t plugged into anything. There are also a few framed, glass-covered boxes scattered over any available flat surface that house mounted displays with insects of differing varieties pinned inside, mostly bees. Leaning in one dark corner, looking forlorn and lonely—and being used to hold up a broken sideboard of a battered bookshelf—is an old instrument case. John thinks it might belong to a violin or other small string instrument maybe, though it looks as if it hasn’t been touched in years.

Sherlock makes a waving motion towards his bed, wanting John to sit, while he heads over to the microscope on his desk and checks something disturbingly viscous and red on a glass slide through the lens. John sits cautiously on top of the rumpled duvet, as if afraid that something is going to jump out and bite him in the arse. Or worse, turn him over to the police. His heart rate increases exponentially at the thought.

“Sherlock,” he says nervously, “I shouldn’t be here. Really. We’re going to get caught.”

Sherlock doesn’t even deign him with a glance; he simply keeps staring into the eyepiece of the microscope. “No, we won’t. Come on, John—live on the wild side for once in your life.”

John frowns deeply at Sherlock’s back as he says this. “I think I’m living on the wild side enough already, ta very much.” But he continues to sit on Sherlock’s bed and rub his hands nervously along the tops of his thighs, licking his lips. “You’re sure he won’t come back?” he asks once again, not able to let it go.
“John, I’ve told you,” Sherlock stresses, and he at last seems to understand how nervous John is about this whole thing because he finally looks up from the microscope, walking back to the man sitting on his bed. “He’s gone for another piss up. He usually stays away for days and even if he did decide to cut it short, the old sod always waits until the pub closes down and he can’t find a friend to put him up for another night before stumbling back home.” Sherlock reaches him and falls down to sit on the bed beside John, close, their sides touching from their shoulders all the way down to their knees as they sit next to each other. John can’t help but think that Sherlock looks very young in his short-sleeved graphic t-shirt, the logo on the front so faded that John can barely see it, and worn-out jeans which Sherlock seems endearingly comfortable in. “He never leaves a drinking establishment during business hours, and since you can’t stay the night because of your wife, this is perfect for us.”

John does have to admit, it is pretty damn perfect for them. Aside from the fact that Sherlock’s father is an abusive drunk who leaves his teenage child alone for days at a time without even making sure he is cared for…

John winces at his train of thought, feeling something like shame bubbling up in his chest. “Christ, Sherlock,” he whispers, turning away from him. “I’m sorry that you have to live this way. I’m so sorry. I should be helping you, not…” He trails off, because he doesn’t exactly know how to describe what he’s doing to the boy. He remembers that Sherlock is just a child, one who has been abused and neglected his whole life and it is a very real possibility that John is taking advantage of him, whether Sherlock chooses to believe it or not.

And Sherlock makes it very clear that he certainly does not believe it.

The brunet moves up to kneel on the mattress and turns towards John, bringing his large hands up to push at John’s shoulders. Sherlock twists John’s body around to face him and gently moves John down onto the bed so that he is lying on top of the duvet. Sherlock follows him down, crawling on top of him until he is straddling John, knees on either side of John’s hips and mouth lowering to brush his lips over the older man’s, barely touching.

“Don’t be sorry, John,” Sherlock whispers to him, voice soft, and it sounds like pleading. “Just make it better. You always know how to make it better.”

And John can’t help it. He knows he shouldn’t give in now, just like he knows he shouldn’t have given in a million other times in the past. But he has never been able to deny Sherlock Holmes anything. So he tilts his head up to meet Sherlock’s lips and forgets the fact that this boy needs help, this boy needs an adult in his life who will take care of him properly, one who he can trust and rely on to not hurt him, to keep his emotional and mental well-being in mind.

John gets lost in the feel of Sherlock’s body above his own and forgets all of that.

He wraps his arms around Sherlock’s slim shoulders and brings Sherlock’s body crashing down on top of him for only a moment before he is rolling over, switching their positions and pinning Sherlock below his more substantial weight, one thigh slipping between Sherlock’s legs and rubbing up against the growing bulge he finds there, never letting their lips break apart.

As Sherlock tumbles onto his back, he moans against John’s mouth and the movement turns their close-mouthed kiss into something softer and a little more open. John doesn’t use his tongue, not yet, but he slots his bottom lip in between each of Sherlock’s, letting the kiss become slightly wetter and a bit desperate. Below him, he can already feel Sherlock’s hips bucking up into his, the movements jerky and hard, and John is reminded that Sherlock’s only sexual experiences thus far have been a few wanks and a quick, awkward rub-off in a public place.
That just won’t do at all.

John’s rough, gun-worn hands run over Sherlock’s clothed chest, touching everything they can through the fabric of his t-shirt. He passes the pads of his thumbs over Sherlock’s erect nipples and feels them harden even more at his simple touch, turning to hard peaks as John drags the material of his shirt against them. Sherlock gasps, tilting his head up and opening his mouth farther. John can’t contain himself any longer—not when presented with such a perfect, beautiful opportunity—and he reaches his tongue out to sweep it over Sherlock’s plump bottom lip softly. There is something about the way Sherlock tips his face up to John’s, straining for more, yearning for it, which makes John lose what little control he has left of himself. The gesture is so trusting, so desperate. John’s cock twitches in his trousers at the sight. He gently licks at Sherlock’s lips—just the tip of his tongue against the edge of Sherlock’s mouth—but the boy loses it nonetheless. He is so incredibly sensitive.

Sherlock arches into John, pressing his hips hard against the man’s and moans. “John.”

“Yes,” John whispers against his lips, more a sound of surrender than anything else, and sweeps his tongue out to lick Sherlock’s mouth again. Sherlock tastes sweet and feels so soft. Young and naïve and so willing underneath John. Completely and perfectly lovely. John thinks that he will never be able to let him go.

Cautiously, Sherlock begins to mimic John’s movements, much the same as he had the other day at the coffee shop when John kissed him. John knows that this is how Sherlock learns new things, gathers new data, and he wants to show Sherlock everything, teach him all of it. So John meets Sherlock’s tongue with his own between their open lips, sliding against it and driving it back so that he has access to Sherlock’s mouth.

John tastes him, indulgent and slow. He can tell that Sherlock smoked earlier—probably after Sherlock’s last class, before the teen went to meet him—but John doesn’t care. He still thinks Sherlock is delicious.

As John continues to kiss him, Sherlock goes limp under the older man except for the occasional thrust of his pelvis, his cock incredibly hard against John’s own aching arousal. He moves his hands over Sherlock’s thin body, dipping underneath the brunet’s t-shirt and touching bare skin for the first time. It feels soft and smooth, completely hairless everywhere John touches.

“God,” John moans into Sherlock’s mouth, panting heavily. Sherlock takes the chance to test what John has taught him and attempts to French kiss him. It is sloppy and uncoordinated, smearing spit over their lips and making everything too slick.

John doesn’t care at all.

“Take this off,” he breathes, yanking at Sherlock’s t-shirt. He tries to pull it up, but his own weight as he lies on top of Sherlock is pinning it to the boy’s body, frustrating him. “Please, let me see you.”

Sherlock releases a frantic cry and his hands come up to shakily help John divest himself of his shirt. Once it is gone, John leans back slightly to marvel at the body beneath him.

Sherlock’s naked torso is just as beautiful as everything else that John has seen on him. His skin is magnificently pale, flushed a glowing pink now in arousal, and he is too skinny for John’s liking. His stomach dips inward slightly as he lies on the bed beneath John, moving erratically with his uneven breaths under John’s unblinking gaze. Even though the doctor in John knows that Sherlock isn’t anywhere close to being unhealthily underweight, John still wants to feed him up and take
care of him, give him nothing but tea and biscuits and sweets until he has a plump little belly, full
and round and healthy. Pulling his mind away from that thought, John tries to focus on other
things; there will be plenty of time to make sure that Sherlock is pampered and cared for later. For
now there are other issues to concentrate on. John continues looking down at Sherlock, and while
his earlier thought of the brunet being very nearly hairless is true, John sees that there is a
smattering of dark freckles and birth marks that litter Sherlock’s chest and stomach, aching to be
kissed and nipped and sucked at.

Gorgeous. John thinks he is absolutely gorgeous.

After looking his fill, John dips his head down to lick at the newly exposed skin that he has
uncovered, leaving wet trails along Sherlock’s neck and across both dark pink nipples in turn.
Sherlock jolts at the new sensation, his legs twitching. He turns his head to bury his face in his
pillow as a startled sound leaves his throat, baring the long line of his neck.

“Do you like that?” John asks him lowly, lips brushing against the wet peak of one nipple while his
fingers come up to rub at the other, hard and tight and hoping for the same attention. John brings
his fingers up to his mouth and slicks them liberally, letting them slide back over Sherlock’s nipple
while his mouth closes over the nearest one again. Sherlock moans loudly as John pinches him,
lightly, between his fingers, tonguing the other side of his chest. John tugs the hardened flesh
carefully, stretching the skin slightly, while he kisses Sherlock’s other nipple softly, a confusing
contrast that has Sherlock panting and bucking beneath him, hands coming up to twist in John’s
shirt. John presses teeth into the hard little nub once, quickly, before he releases both of Sherlock’s
nipples and slides his mouth down Sherlock’s chest. Sherlock lets out a small little whine as he
presses his thumbs into both of Sherlock’s nipples gently to take away the slight pain as he kisses his way down Sherlock’s chest to continue his explorations.

John lets his mouth slide down farther to Sherlock’s perfect little belly button and along the top
edge of his jeans as he continues to thumb at Sherlock’s nipples. He can feel Sherlock’s stomach
moving up and down as Sherlock heaves great breaths of air into his lungs, and John looks a little
farther down the pale, thin body until his eyes catch on the straining bulge of Sherlock’s erection
inside his jeans.

He suddenly feels the very urgent need to see that erection completely bared to him.

“Trousers,” John pants, and he wonders if he is making any sense at all. “Do you want to—”

John knows it is probably too fast, but he suddenly doesn't care. He needs. He is tired of being
responsible, tired of being careful. And he doesn't want to give himself the chance to change his
mind yet again. He knows if he waits longer, takes things slower, it is just more time for him to
come up with further excuses on why he shouldn't do this. Excuses that he doesn't want. This is
what he wants.

“Yes,” Sherlock moans, squirming against John’s weight on top of him. “Please, yes.”

John doesn’t have to be told twice. He braces his full weight on his knees between Sherlock’s
open thighs as he brings his hands down to work at the flies on the jeans. Sherlock is so skinny
that even the seemingly small size he is wearing leaves a gap between his belly and the waistband,
making it easy for John to slip his fingers under it and get them undone. Once they are open he
wastes no time in yanking them down the slim hips and thighs so violently that Sherlock’s whole
body is dragged down the bed with them, pulling Sherlock’s arse against the tops of his own
thighs. John growls in frustration as he realises that he is not going to be able to divest Sherlock of
his trousers unless he coordinates himself. Sherlock is being more than useless, moaning and
squirming about on the bed as he lies on his back, eyes completely glazed over and hair a messy
black halo against the white pillow.

After some fumbling about, John is finally able to divest him of his trousers, pants, shoes, and socks, leaving Sherlock completely bare while John kneels above him still fully clothed. Sherlock doesn’t even seem to notice that he is the only one naked.

John’s eyes drift over the boy’s body as Sherlock’s hands come up to try to cover himself. If he has never kissed anyone before John, then the man knows that he has never let anyone see him naked. The thought sends a delicious, possessive shiver through John and he feels the sudden need to stake his claim on Sherlock’s skin, brand it as his own, be the first to mark and mar its unblemished perfection. So he does, biting and sucking at Sherlock’s neck and belly and thighs, leaving small, pink marks against the white skin, mixing with the numerous birth marks that litter his body. The freckles on Sherlock’s stomach lead all the way down to his hips and a few even make it as low as Sherlock’s thighs. John wants nothing more than to taste each and every one of them, but he is suddenly distracted by Sherlock’s large hands trying their best to cover up his engorged prick in embarrassment as John hovers over his groin.

Well that just won’t do. John went through all of that hassle to undress him, after all. He wants to see everything.

“Let me see you,” John pleads, voice soft and desperate as he hovers over Sherlock, on his hands and knees. “Please, can I see you?”

Sherlock’s head makes a movement that might be a “yes” but certainly isn’t a “no”, and so John brings his hands over to thread his fingers through Sherlock’s own, the tips just barely brushing the hardness beneath them. Sherlock moans loudly, almost a wail, and his hands go limp, letting John move them away as his anxious body submits to John’s tender persistence and finally allows John to uncover him completely.

“There, now,” John whispers softly to him, trying to comfort and calm him. He presses light, soothing kisses to his mouth, worried of frightening him. He doesn’t want Sherlock to ever be nervous about what they are doing, to ever be scared or uncomfortable or embarrassed. “There we go. That’s better, isn’t it?” He glances down between them and his breath catches in his throat at the sight that meets his eyes. John looks back up and gives Sherlock one more slow, tender kiss before saying, “My God, Sherlock. You’re beautiful, you know that? You’re so amazingly beautiful.”

And Sherlock is. He is gorgeous. He is slightly smaller in size than John, but that is to be expected because of his age. It isn’t a fair comparison, anyways, because John knows his own cock is slightly larger than average. It’s not such a big difference that it requires bragging about, John has learned over the years, but it is enough to have been a help or a hindrance in the past, depending on the situation. Sherlock’s cock is definitely more slender than John’s, which is thick and flares out slightly past the crown before it tapers back down past the head of his shaft. Sherlock’s prick is a decent enough length, though, and the tip is uncut like John’s own. The foreskin has fully retracted in Sherlock’s arousal and John can see that Sherlock is leaking copiously down along his shaft, which has flushed an angry red colour. Sherlock is almost completely hairless down here as well, except for a small, thick thatch of dark, dark pubic hair at the base of his cock. His balls are drawn up tight against his body already, as if he is minutes away from releasing, no matter if he gets stimulation or not. The bones of his hips jut out alarmingly on either side of his pelvis, framing his groin peculiarly.

John’s mouth waters as he stares down at the sight before him and his cock jumps, pressing into the fly of his trousers uncomfortably. Careful not to touch Sherlock’s crotch at all, John
manoeuvres himself so that he is lying to one side of the brunet, leveling them against one another so that John can kiss him again, letting his hands wander all over Sherlock’s torso and belly, but staying clear of his straining cock. He keeps his touches light and teasing, taking his time and exploring every inch of Sherlock except the one place he knows Sherlock is aching for him to touch. John knows he can still push things too far too fast if he is not careful, and he won’t risk Sherlock’s comfort just because he is aching to take the boy in hand.

No, he remembers that this is Sherlock’s first experience going this far, and so he reins himself in. He limits himself to soft, sweet kisses that include tongues once again. Sherlock is a quick study and he is gaining more control over his lips and tongue with each minute that passes, making John groan against his mouth and tighten his calloused fingers along the bare skin of Sherlock’s torso, shoulders, neck, hair.

As they continue to kiss and touch, John comes to find that Sherlock is all arms and legs. Like a baby giraffe that is slowly becoming accustomed to its size and learning to walk properly. It seems like there is always elbows or knees shoved into John’s body at odd, painful angles. Gangly, is what John would call the boy. Adorably gangly. It is almost as if Sherlock’s arms and legs are refusing to wait for the rest of his body to catch up. Now that John has him naked, he can see how Sherlock’s torso looks just slightly too short for the rest of him. T-shirts like the one he was wearing today always seem to fit him fine, but John has taken great delight over the past few months in watching as Sherlock has worn button downs that slowly become too short for him in the arms and hearing him complain about finally having to relent and throw out pairs of his older favourite jeans and dress shirts. John doesn’t remember ever being quite so…disproportionate when he was a teen, but he figures he must have been. It’s not an easy time for anyone, no matter how popular—or not—you are.

Beside him Sherlock seems oblivious to John’s attention. He has thrown his head back and closed his eyes as John sucks along his long neck. His fingers clutch at John’s clothing in any accessible place, gripping tightly and tugging to gain leverage as Sherlock tries to thrust his hips against John’s body, but John gently stops him with a soft pressure to his boney hip.

“Sherlock,” he whispers against the brunet’s neck, wet with his kisses. “Can I watch you? I want to see you touch yourself.” He aches with the desire for it, to finally see the image that Sherlock had burned into his mind all those nights ago, when he first told John about masturbating to thoughts of the older man.

Sherlock moans wantonly and nods his head, eyes still closed tightly shut as if in shame. He brings a large, pale hand down to himself, gripping the base of his hard cock to steady it while he reaches his other hand over to run his fingertips up along the shaft and then to circle the head. He pulls his foreskin forward and then pushes it back down in small, teasing half-strokes, spreading the wetness he finds there around the crown and then slowly farther down his shaft, slicking himself up naturally. Sherlock groans at the feeling and so does John, and the two sounds mix together as one.

“What do you think about?” John asks, panting. He has pulled away from Sherlock slightly so that he can see the boy clearly, and Sherlock has lost himself so completely in the feel of his own pleasure that he doesn’t even seem to notice.


John’s cock jumps harder in his trousers. “What about me?” he prods, fighting the urge to touch himself. He wants to pay complete attention to what is happening in front of him, wants to know the answers to these questions that have been burning in his mind since that night weeks ago. “Tell
me. I want to hear you say the words. What do I do to you in your mind?"

Sherlock whimpers as his hand strokes down his own cock, using his precome as lubricant to smooth the movement. John is amazed at how much Sherlock is leaking; there is enough fluid that it looks as if there is hardly any friction between Sherlock’s skin and his prick. “You…you touch me.”

John groans. “Is that all?” he asks. He wants to know more, wants to hear all of it. “Where do I touch you? Show me. Show me how you imagine I touch you.”

Sherlock’s breaths are coming in short pants now. “Here,” he whispers, and his hand slides back up his length to circle the crown of his cock, playing with his retracted foreskin once more, pulling and pushing at it again, his thumb sliding over the slit of his cock and spreading more wetness around. “Like this.”

God, yes, perfect, John thinks to himself, mouth gaping open as he watches what is happening in front of him. “What else do I do?”

Sherlock’s body strains against a sharp jolt of arousal as he pinches down lightly on the head of his cock. “You kiss me,” he tells John, finally opening his lovet eyes and looking at the man next to him, imploring him to do something, anything.

“Like this?” John asks him, moving back down to capture Sherlock’s kiss-swollen mouth with his own.

“Yes,” Sherlock gasps against his lips, opening his mouth wide so that John can taste him freely. His tongue doesn’t even move to meet John’s own; it simply lies limply in his mouth, all of his attention on what his hands are doing to his own cock.

“Close,” Sherlock whimpers out against his mouth, and yes, John can feel it in the way Sherlock’s body is tensing against his, in the feel of Sherlock’s hands becoming jerky in their movements along his own cock. John pulls back so that he can watch; he wants so desperately to see Sherlock climax, know what it looks like. He brings a tan hand up, reaching out slowly towards the boy’s cock. Sherlock’s head is thrown back once more, eyes screwed shut, and so he doesn’t know what John is about to do until the man does it. John brushes the tips of his index and middle finger along the head of Sherlock’s sensitive cock just as Sherlock’s own hand pulls down along the shaft, John’s fingers swirling through the slick precome that is dripping from the slit.

That is all that it takes for Sherlock to come with a scream, body pulling taut and muscles going tight. His cock pulses in his hands, pushing out stream after stream of come that splatters Sherlock’s belly, his chest, a few drops even reaching his neck. His breaths are coming in great heaving puffs and his stomach is inflating and deflating rapidly with each gulp of air he takes.

It is the most beautiful thing John has ever seen in his life. John can’t take his eyes off of him.

Sherlock lies there for a moment, completely lost in the feel of his own climax. Both of his hands are gripping his still-hard cock, one down at the very base, almost holding his own balls, and the other close to it, towards the bottom of his shaft. John has a perfect, unimpeded view of the top half of his shaft and the tip of Sherlock’s prick, can clearly see the milky-white liquid that has splattered the crown. He can’t resist the urge to reach out once more and run a single finger along the head, rubbing down to Sherlock’s frenulum and sliding across the sensitive spot with come-slickened ease. At this Sherlock convulses again, his prick leaking out the last dregs of semen his body has to offer, and another small cry is torn from his throat. John stares at him in wonder as he realises that Sherlock has just had another small orgasm simply from John’s light touch on his
sensitive cock.

Beautiful. Simply beautiful, John thinks.

It takes Sherlock a few minutes to recover himself, and John doesn’t rush him. They lie in his bed next to one another as the brunet’s breathing slowly returns to normal and he opens his striking-coloured eyes to look John directly in the face, his expression so unguarded and relaxed that John is struck speechless over the perfection that has just transpired between them.

“I, er,” John starts, and then realises that he has to lick his lips and clear his throat before he can continue. “That was…I need to use the loo,” he finishes lamely, sitting up rather painfully, grimacing as he bends his hips to get off of the bed and the movement digs his rock hard cock into the zipper of his trousers.

Sherlock simply looks at him with a confused frown, sitting up himself, unashamed now by his nakedness. “But don’t you want me to do the same for you?” he asks, perplexed.

John blushes as he finally manages to crawl awkwardly off of the bed and stand rather painfully. “I’ll take care of it myself, don’t worry.” He starts to move away but Sherlock’s voice stops him once more.

“Why don’t you just do it here in bed, with me?”

John sighs and runs a hand through his messy, short blond hair, searching for the right words. “I don’t want to rush you into doing anything that you’re not ready for, Sherlock. It can be scary, doing stuff like this for the first time. You wanted to orgasm with me, and I’m fine with that if it’s what you want. But I won’t make you do something that you’re not comfortable with. It’s not fair to you.”

Sherlock’s confused frown only grows and he shakes his head, sending his curls flying, frizzy beyond help now that they have been rubbed back and forth along the pillow. “But what if I want to do it?” he asks John plaintively.

John just gives him a small smile. “Not today, lovely,” he says with a tiny shake of his head. “Let’s give it a little while longer, yeah? Make sure you’re completely okay with it.” Sherlock can say all he wants that he’s fine with it, but John could sense his hesitancy during what happened earlier, when John had completely undressed him and then had him touch himself while John watched. Sherlock was embarrassed to do those things, uncomfortable with having John’s eyes on him, and John knows that means that Sherlock isn’t quite ready to take their relationship further. For now, John will have to be the one to do what is best for the boy, John will have to be one who knows where to draw the line. He won’t ever do anything to hurt Sherlock or make him uncomfortable, and if that means that he’ll have to suffer through the pain of self-restraint for a few minutes while watching Sherlock get off, well, he’ll just have to deal with that.

“But, what are you going to do now?” Sherlock asks, and he sounds for all the world like a child who is on the verge of throwing a wobbly.

“I just need your loo for a few minutes,” John explains patiently. “It won’t be long, trust me. That was…what you did was…amazing,” he says, stumbling over his own words. “It was beautiful. You’re beautiful. I’ll think about it while I….” he trails off, face flaming, because Sherlock doesn’t really need to hear that John is going to wank to the memory of him coming. So instead he says, “Thank you, for doing that for me.” John bends down over the bed to give him one more searing, deep kiss that Sherlock opens up to completely. “I’ll be back in a bit.”
He makes his way over to the en suite and closes the door firmly behind him, locking it for good measure and then even going as far as to turn on the tap of the faucet. He doesn't know what sounds or words will come out of his mouth as he replays every instant of what just happened on Sherlock’s bed, thinking about all of the things he had held back from doing to the boy.

*

When he is finished relieving himself in Sherlock’s bathroom, John is treated to a half-dressed Sherlock (the bottom half, thankfully) pulling him out of the loo as soon as he opens the door and dragging him around the bedroom, showing off all of the pieces of science equipment that he has and going on and on about the many experiments he is running. John listens intently to all of it, enraptured by everything that Sherlock is doing. There is the acrid scent of fresh cigarette smoke in the air, but it is not too strong; he looks to one side of the room as Sherlock continues talking and sees the bedroom window open. He figures that Sherlock must sit on the sill whenever he has a cigarette, blowing the smoke outside. John is grateful for that much at least; even the slight hint of the smell inside Sherlock’s house is starting to get to him.

When Sherlock finishes showing John everything in the bedroom, he pulls the man back out into the house, continuing the explanations of every experiment in every room until they finally reach the maybe-kitchen. Now that John looks a little harder, he can see that there is indeed a fridge in one corner of the room, so he assumes that his guess is correct. He interrupts Sherlock briefly to ask if he could possibly make himself a cuppa, and Sherlock waves his hand dismissively, indicating that he doesn’t really care one way or the other.

So John digs through a cabinet until he finds something that is probably a kettle (he hopes—it looks more like something a mad scientist has built), filling it and setting it to boil. Then he rummages around until he finds a couple of tea bags that he prays haven’t gone bad. And finally he opens up the fridge, finding all manner of alarming things that he tries to ignore. He quickly locates the milk and shuts the fridge door, dreading the thought of having to open it again. He decides it would be best to give the milk a quick once over before using it, since it was housed next to something that looked suspiciously like pickled pig’s feet. When he opens the carton to take a testing whiff, he nearly gags.

“Sherlock, I think your milk’s gone off,” he says through a pinched face.

“Yeah,” Sherlock says, unconcerned, poking at something growing in a petri dish that is sitting along the window sill above the sink. “It tends to do that.”

John once again feels a pang of pity for the boy, being essentially alone and obviously not knowing how to care for himself. Sherlock can argue all he wants that he is perfectly capable of looking after himself but John knows better—he can’t even make himself a cup of tea without risking food poisoning. John silently thinks on the fact that Sherlock seems to be more like a small child who is trying to play house but doesn’t quite know what to do in order to survive. He is about to open his mouth to say something about Sherlock’s living conditions once again, but as John turns towards him an object on the edge of the worktop catches his attention. It looks disturbingly like…

“That’s a skull,” John says, staring at the thing with surprising apathy. It stares back at him with empty, black eye sockets and a toothy, almost mocking smile.

“Mmm, yes. Friend of mine.” Sherlock’s tone is disturbingly casual as he goes about continuing to poke at the petri dish, as if his answer explains everything. He doesn’t even bother to spare John a glance when he speaks to him. “Well,” he rectifies, “I say ‘friend’…”

“Right,” John says, continuing to stare at the skull, completely dumbfounded. “Yeah, so…tea?”
Thankfully, the kettle chooses that moment to boil, and John gladly begins to tackle the new task of making himself a decent cup of tea with questionable PG Tips and no milk. **Well, at least there is sugar,** he thinks to himself as he glances into a bowl on the worktop. Even though he doesn’t take sugar in his tea, he thinks he may need to this time, depending on how long the tea bags have been floating around Sherlock’s kitchen before he sets one of them to brew in his cup.

He is just about to reach for the white granulated substance when he hears Sherlock say ominously behind him, “I wouldn’t do that if I were you. It’s rat poison. I think. I can’t remember which bowl I put it in.”

John decides he doesn’t really need tea after all.
They continue going to Sherlock’s house whenever his father isn’t there, which seems to be quite a lot. Sometimes they do nothing but sit and talk, cuddled up together on the sofa in the sitting room or curled around one another in Sherlock’s bed, and John comes to find that he rather enjoys Sherlock’s sharp elbows jabbing into him in uncomfortable places or the boy’s bony feet in his lap. He delights in being able to spend any time with Sherlock away from the threat of prying eyes in a way they never were at the coffee shop. He has even taken to stopping at a corner shop on his way over and bringing his own milk sometimes so that he can make them both a proper cup of tea. He enjoys the days when they are at Sherlock’s house doing nothing but talking about forensic pathology, or internal medicine, or ghastly crimes that Sherlock seems obsessed with.

But he likes the times they are doing more than talking a lot better.

John has made Sherlock wank himself in front of him a handful of times now and Sherlock has become shameless about it, losing that edge of shyness that he had the first time John watched him. Now, instead of trying to cover himself up whenever he feels exposed, he has taken to opening his legs wantonly, spreading himself out for John to see and looking the man straight in the eye as he pulls at himself and pants out John’s name.

After those first few times, John brings another treat around with him to Sherlock’s: a bottle of lubricant that he figures they will need more of in the near future. The first time John brings it, Sherlock tells him that he has never wanked with lube before, his voice little more than a breathy whisper while the smooth sound of the gel squishes wetly between his fingers as they clench tightly around his cock. Sherlock says he has only ever used the slick of his own precome when he touches himself, and John can understand why—he is a bit of a leaker. When aroused, there is always a steady stream of precome flowing freely from Sherlock’s cock, more than anyone John has ever seen before. Despite this, Sherlock delights in the feel of the cool silkiness of the lube around his warm shaft and the added glide. John delights in watching him enjoy it again and again.

That is all he has allowed himself, though. He has yet to touch Sherlock other than to kiss him, and he hasn’t even undressed in front of him. Instead, John still takes himself to the loo after every time he makes Sherlock toss off in front of him.

Sherlock doesn’t like it but John thinks that he has dictated too much in their relationship already,
and John isn’t going to let Sherlock push himself into something he isn’t ready for. After a couple weeks of watching Sherlock touch himself under John’s direction and gaze, though, John’s will is starting to wear thin. John has never considered himself a weak man by any means. He was a soldier, after all; he has been to war. But the sight before him now is too much.

Sherlock is lying on his bed, naked and pale and glorious, wanking himself vigorously. His head is thrown back, spine arched, and he is panting John’s name like a prayer. A fine sheen of sweat is covering his body and John has spent a ridiculous amount of time tasting Sherlock everywhere he can; his neck, his nipples, his belly button, the soft skin of this thighs, the back of his knees. John has kept his hands and his mouth away from Sherlock’s cock, though. John has touched him everywhere, put his mouth against every piece of Sherlock except the one place that Sherlock’s hands never leave. Soon he has Sherlock begging for more, for less, for John to stop when he gets too close, for John to never stop again, until Sherlock finally settles on, “Just a little bit more, John, please.”

John groans as Sherlock pleads and whimpers beneath him, straining his bony hips up to try to find some sort of friction for his cock other than his own hand. But John pulls away, rising up to his knees on the shoddy mattress, his own breath coming in small pants and huffs. He looks down at the mess that Sherlock has turned into beneath his hands and his mouth, and John’s cock strains so hard against his trousers that he can barely move. He has to, he just has to…

“Oh fuck, Sherlock, I need…can I?” he asks, but his hands are already scrambling to undo the flies on his trousers, shaking and uncoordinated. Sherlock is staring up at him with wide, stunned eyes. Sherlock’s own hand has completely stilled on his cock and his breath starts coming in faster huffs as he watches John undo his zipper.

“Yes,” Sherlock breathes, and his voice holds a hint of something that sounds like wonder. “Yes. I want to see it, too.”

John doesn’t need to be told again. He pulls his trousers halfway down his thighs, taking his pants along with them, and doesn’t even bother removing his button down shirt—he just rucks it up with one hand, exposing nothing higher than his belly button. He is desperate for release. He hasn’t felt the need to orgasm this urgently since the night that Sherlock told him that he had wanked to thoughts of John and the man had barely managed to make it into the bathroom of his house before he was tossing himself off.

John palms his thick cock, stroking it fully once to relieve some of the pain that still lingers in the organ from being confined for so long. He looks down at Sherlock once more to find the teen staring at his prick, mouth agape. John knows that this is probably the first time Sherlock has seen a cock other than his own, and the thought sends a shot of arousal through his body. He moans and strokes himself faster, panting.

“You, too,” he tells Sherlock, who has stopped rubbing himself in favour of watching John. Sherlock’s cock is still hard, though, and John knows that it won’t be long before he comes.

Truthfully, it won’t be long before he comes, either.

He hasn’t had any sort of sexual release with a partner in so long; it doesn’t even matter that Sherlock isn’t touching him. John’s body is pulled as tight as a bow string and he knows that anything can set him off right now. He grits his teeth and slows his stroking because he’ll be damned if he will shoot off before a teenager who has been touching himself for the better part of thirty minutes.

“John,” Sherlock whimpers, as he begins stroking his own cock again. His eyes haven’t left John’s
prick, and the thought alone of knowing that Sherlock is watching while John gets himself off is enough to make him tremble in arousal.

“Yeah, watch me,” John pants out, not even aware that he is talking. “Oh fuck, that’s hot.”

“You’re beautiful,” Sherlock tells him, and John has to close his eyes and bite his lip to keep from coming right then. No one has spoken to John like that, while sharing any sort of sexual stimulation with him, in so long. He has forgotten how good it feels to be wanted. “You’re big, too,” Sherlock says as his strokes increase in speed over his own cock. He bites his bottom lip, still swollen from John’s earlier kisses, and closes his eyes. He is so close to coming that John can hear it in his breathing. “I can’t believe how big you are.” Sherlock whines softly and his hand starts twisting at the end of his strokes, squeezing along the crown of his cock the way he does when he is about to orgasm. John’s own strokes speed up to match them. “I want to touch you so badly, John. I want to taste you. I can’t wait for you to fuck me.” The words barely make it out of Sherlock’s mouth—that sinful mouth—before he gasps and his orgasm overtakes him, racking his body with shudders and streaking across the skin of his soft belly and his groin.

And that’s it, that’s all that John Watson’s will can take. He groans out something that might be Sherlock’s name, but his orgasm rips through him like wildfire, consuming all thoughts and motor functions. He is vaguely aware that he hadn’t even pulled away from Sherlock, and when his brain kicks back online he quickly looks down the length of the lithe body to see his come all over Sherlock’s stomach, mixing with Sherlock’s own.

It is the sexiest thing John has ever seen, and he lets out another tortured groan, wishing that he was young enough to be able to wait twenty minutes and go at it again.

“Oh God,” he pants out, body going limp over Sherlock’s as he settles tiredly over the boy. He lets go of his shirt where he has been holding it up against his own stomach and brings his hands up to Sherlock’s face, pressing their mouths together and kissing him. Sherlock only has the energy to lie motionless beneath John and surrender himself to the man’s lips, sloppy from exhaustion. “You’re beautiful, perfect, so perfect. I love the way you look with my come all over you. My beautiful boy.” John is rambling, has no idea what his words mean anymore. His mind is still on fire from his orgasm.

Beneath him, Sherlock rubs their bodies together, smearing their release between them, making their bellies slide slickly against one another. John groans into Sherlock’s mouth and wishes like hell that he could taste it, taste them together, them combined. But he refrains. He is a doctor, after all, and he knows the risks of sharing bodily fluids. He is surprised with himself for even allowing this, them coming on one another when they haven’t discussed methods of safe sex, but it’s definitely not the most risky thing they could be doing.

They lie on Sherlock’s bed for a little while longer, rubbing and kissing one another slowly before John realises that his trousers aren’t even pushed all the way down his legs and the bottom of his shirt has crept down between their stomachs, covered in semen now. He groans and tears his mouth away from Sherlock’s in favour of getting cleaned up. He doesn’t want to, but he knows he will have to leave soon and he definitely has to wash up before he gets back home. The scent of their ejaculate is rubbed into his stomach, but he can wash that off with a flannel and a little soap. It is the fluid that has soaked into the bottom of his shirt that will be a problem, he knows.

“Come on, sweetheart, let’s go wash up.”

Sherlock groans at the loss of John’s body warmth and huddles into himself, closing his eyes and trying to bury his head under his pillow. “No,” he says petulantly. “Tired.”
“I know, darling. That was intense. I hadn’t meant to…” John trails off as he tucks himself into his pants, realising he sounds awkward. He leaves his trousers undone but settles them back around his hips. “I hope I didn’t make you uncomfortable.”

Sherlock pulls his head out from under his pillow and looks at John, rolling his eyes. “I’ve already told you that I want us to do more. You’ve been watching me wank for over two weeks now. I didn’t lure you into my bed so that I could just get myself off, you know.”

John chuckles at Sherlock’s impatience. “And I told you that we were going to take this slowly. There are already enough things that can go wrong with this relationship, what with me being married, you being my student, and only sixteen and all of that. I don’t want to rush into something and regret it later, or end up hurting you.”

Sherlock stares at him for a moment through slitted eyes, still lying naked and stretched out on his bed. “That’s part of it,” he says, “but it’s not the whole reason why you make me toss off in front of you. You like to watch me.”

John tries not to blush as Sherlock deduces his sexual habits, but he doesn’t think he succeeds. He knew that something like this was coming. Sherlock has no compunctions and no sense of social or personal boundaries, after all. He thinks about arguing with Sherlock but knows it would be more than pointless, so he just shrugs. “Well, yeah,” he admits. “Of course I do. You’re beautiful, you know.”

He hopes he can distract Sherlock with the compliment but the teen is relentless. “And you also like talking to me and telling me what you want me to do.” He gives John a long, contemplative look before declaring, “You have control issues,” as if he is talking about something that is no more interesting than the weather.

“What?” John squawks, face turning beet red now against his wishes. “I do not!”

Sherlock only smiles, though. “Yes, you do. Its fine, I don’t mind it,” he assures John quickly, sitting up on the bed so that he can watch John better. “I actually kind of like that you want to watch me, and the sound of your voice telling me what to do while I’m wanking is better than anything I had imagined in the past, before we started doing this. And it makes sense when you think about your relationship with your wife.”

That’s it, he’s heard enough. John sets his mouth into a hard line and shakes his head quickly back and forth, steeling his tone to brook no argument. “We’re not talking about this anymore,” he says. “Come on, get up and let’s wash. Then I can make us a cuppa and head back home before it gets too late.”

Sherlock sighs as if John has taken all of the fun out of their time together but shuffles off of the bed nonetheless. They make their way into Sherlock’s en suite in comfortable silence. Once by the sink, John wipes Sherlock’s belly and groin off with a wet, slightly soapy flannel, placing kisses on the skin of his stomach as John washes the soap away. Sherlock sighs again above John’s bent head, but it is a happy and content sound this time, his large hands resting on John’s shoulders as the man stoops to clean him. When John swipes the flannel over Sherlock’s cock, he is methodical and clinical about it, never once letting the cotton barrier between the boy’s prick and John’s fingers drop, but he can feel Sherlock hardening slightly under his touch nonetheless. John simply ignores it, though. He can’t get hard again so soon after coming, and there isn’t enough time left to get Sherlock off once more before John will have to get home to avoid Mary becoming suspicous of his “meeting Mike at the pub for a pint” story. So he tries to keep his mind and his touch from straying down that road. Sherlock, thankfully, doesn’t insist, and once he is sufficiently clean, John pulls away and goes about washing himself off.
His trousers and pants are thankfully come-free, but the same most certainly can’t be said about his shirt. The area all around the bottom buttons is already crusting white, and John can’t do anything but run it under the tap, soaking it in water. He doesn’t even take it off of his body when he does this because Sherlock is still in the bathroom, watching him silently, and John isn’t about to undress, even if it is just down to his vest. Sherlock hasn’t seen his scar yet and John wants to keep it that way for as long as possible.

When John is as clean as he can get himself, he follows Sherlock back into his bedroom. John finds his shoes underneath Sherlock’s desk and grabs them, sitting on the edge of the bed to lace them up. As he does so, he watches Sherlock getting redressed, picking up clothes from the floor and not even caring that they weren’t the same ones he had on before John stripped him earlier.

The skinny teen tugs on a pair of tight, dark denim jeans and a faded black t-shirt with a logo on the front of some band that John has never heard of. The jeans are worn through in the pockets and look like they have definitely seen better days. The shirt is wrinkled from being on the floor for so long and John can’t help but give the boy an amused look.

“Why do you dress like that?” John asks him as Sherlock sits down on the floor to tug a pair of high-top chucks onto his large feet, lacing them up methodically.

“Like what?” Sherlock asks, and John can tell that he isn’t really interested in John’s question because his gaze has already wandered over to the microscope that is sitting on his desk.

But John isn’t deterred. He is used to only having half of Sherlock’s attention sometimes. “Some days you look like you’ve just stepped off of a photo-shoot and other days you look like,” he searches for a word to describe Sherlock but can’t think of anything better than, “a teenager.”

At this, Sherlock looks over at him and gives him an amused grin. “I am a teenager,” he tells John. He finishes tying off his shoes and pushes himself off of the floor to stand once again.

John frowns. He doesn’t really like the reminder of Sherlock’s youth, but he supposes he walked right into that one. “You know what I mean.”

Sherlock shrugs as he wanders over to his microscope, looking into the eyepiece and then fiddling with a knob. “Mycroft buys my clothes for me and sends them to me through the post,” he says casually, as if it is not a strange thing at all to have someone mail you your clothes. “I think he tries to dress me like him.” John doesn’t need to see Sherlock’s face to know that he has scrunched it up in distaste at the very thought of being anything like his big brother.

“He buys your clothes?” John asks incredulously. “From London?” It seems like such a strange thing to do, even for an older sibling.

Sherlock makes a noise of affirmation but doesn’t take his gaze away from the microscope. “Yes. The measurements are always perfect, and he seems to know exactly when I have a growth spurt and need more.”

John thinks it’s more telling than Sherlock realises that Mycroft cares enough about his little brother to make sure that he is clothed, even from a whole city away. But Sherlock probably wouldn’t like that little piece of information voiced, so he keeps it to himself.

“Okay, so if he buys all of your clothes, why do you still dress like this?” John makes a gesture to the back of Sherlock’s current ratty outfit, even though he knows Sherlock can’t see him.

“Mycroft sends me a respectable amount of shirts and trousers, and even shoes, but it is nothing
that will sustain me for more than a fortnight, not with how fast I’m outgrowing all of my old
clothes,” Sherlock explains, and John can tell by his tone that he is getting tired of the
conversation. If John isn’t careful the teen will start talking about blood splatter patterns and the
decay rate of the human body just to change the subject. “I detest doing laundry and while he pays
for me to take my things to the dry cleaner twice a month, I would rather use half of that money to
buy cigarettes and science equipment, so I’ve found that I need to increase the size of my wardrobe
to get me through having my clothes laundered only once a month.”

“So instead of doing your laundry yourself, you just get more clothes?” The incredulity in John’s
voice only grows, as does the confounded grin on his face. “You’re a berk, you know that?” John
asks him with a laugh. Sherlock doesn’t seem quite as amused. The look he gives John is one of
cold indifference.

“It’s just,” John explains quickly, “it seems like a lot of trouble to go through. I’m surprised
Mycroft hasn’t just scooped you up and forced you to live with him, is all. The way you talk about
him, he seems a little…controlling.” John chooses his words carefully, looking at Sherlock out of
the corner of his eye, knowing that he is already walking on thin ice with this topic of
conversation. Sherlock very rarely talks about this part of his life, however, and John wants to
know more about how Sherlock takes care of himself, if only to know that Sherlock really is all
right.

Sherlock turns back to his microscope and begins fiddling with knobs and slides, not looking at
John but shrugging his thin shoulders. “He tried, when I was younger, before he put me in rehab.
But it never worked out very well. His job doesn’t keep him in London for very long and he
refused to leave me alone, so he always tried to take me along wherever he went. He hired a
private tutor for me, thought I would like travelling the world. He thought it would keep me
‘entertained’.” Sherlock says the word like even the thought of it is boring.

John tries to hide a smile. “And did it?”

Sherlock smirks behind his microscope, still avoiding John’s gaze. “I managed to slip out of his
clutches everywhere he took me.” His smile grows into something wicked as John watches him.
“It always took him days to find me. While I was alone, I explored the deepest places of the cities
where we were. New York, Tokyo, Moscow, Cairo. I found the most beautiful things, things no
one else cared to look for.” He sighs wistfully, the edges of his mouth dropping slightly as he
changes out a slide, still carefully not looking at John. “I guess after a while Mycroft got tired of
chasing after me and decided it wasn’t worth the effort. He brought me back here and left me the
first chance he could. The only regular contact we’ve had other than the ‘unpleasantness’ with my
drug habit, as he likes to call it, is through post or over text messages.”

John tries to hold back a wince at that, although Sherlock is steadfastly avoiding looking at him.
He knows Sherlock doesn’t like his brother, but it still must hurt to know the only real family he
has left, the only family who could still care for him adequately, doesn’t even want to try. John’s
sure, though, that Sherlock didn’t make it easy for Mycroft, who was trying to start a promising,
important career. John thinks about a younger Sherlock, small and inquisitive, sneaking away
from his older brother and causing him all sorts of trouble. If Sherlock is such a pain in the arse
now, John can only imagine what kind of child he had been. John thinks back on the night
Sherlock first told him about his brother. He remembers the teen saying that Mycroft believes
Sherlock is single-handedly trying to bring down his career. John can’t help but chuckle at that
thought. He can see how someone like Mycroft might think that, although John knows that
Sherlock’s actions are only the cry of a child aching for attention, for stimulation, for someone to
nurture the genius on the cusp of breaking free. John can only stifle a laugh as he imagines what
kind of hellion Sherlock would have been as a child if he had been nurtured properly, allowed to
flourish to his full potential.

“So,” John says, once he is done trying to ineffectively smother his chuckle, “Mycroft tried to take you prisoner and you managed to make a daring escape each time. Now, he just buys you clothes and sends them to you through the post, and he pays for your dry cleaning bill twice a month? What about everything else? If your dad doesn’t work anymore, how do the bills get paid?”

Sherlock shrugs, turning around to grab a different slide to put under the lens of his microscope. “Mycroft sends money,” he answers, and his tone sounds as if this information is unimportant. “Then I go out and pay what needs to be paid.”

John frowns at Sherlock’s back. “You?” he asks skeptically. “You’re sixteen years old and you can’t even keep your milk from going funny.”

At this Sherlock turns around sharply to face John, an affronted look on his face, pushed past his limits by all of John’s probing questions. “I’ll have you know that I’ve been doing it since I was twelve, when my father was no longer able to hold down a job. I hardly ever forget anything anymore,” he says rather sharply. John can’t stop the small wince that pulls at his face at the thought of offending the boy but Sherlock continues, as if he doesn’t notice John’s sudden discomfort.

“And it’s not my fault the milk goes off,” Sherlock says with a scowl. “Maybe it’s just bad milk.”

* *

When John gets home that night he pulls his jumper on over his shirt before he enters the house, hoping that it will hide the large spot that is still wet from its thorough cleaning earlier. He figures he’ll just tell Mary that he spilled some beer on it while at the pub with Mike, but he doesn’t want to lie any more than he has to. He never has been very good at it.

But when he gets in, it isn’t his shirt that she notices after all. She is coming down the entryway towards him and he hasn’t gotten any farther than just inside of the door so he can’t step away from her as she heads for the sitting room off to John’s right.

She mumbles a “hello” as she passes him but then stops. She sniffs the air around him delicately and grimaces.

“You’ve come home smelling like cigarettes the last few times you’ve gone out with Mike,” she states, giving him a hard look. “I thought they didn’t allow smoking in public places anymore.”

John curses himself internally. Of course he smells like smoke after being in Sherlock’s house. Even if the scent is faint it still lingering in each room and every corner. Not to mention the few times that he has been unable to stop Sherlock from lighting up inside his damn car as he drives them to Sherlock’s house.

“I, uh,” he thinks quickly and says the first thing that comes into his mind. “It’s Mike.”

“Mike?” Mary asks. “I thought he had quit.”

“Yeah,” John says, licking his lips and rubbing the back of his neck. “He just started back up again. He reeks whenever I pick him up and makes the whole car smell. And he always has to have another before he heads back home, so I stand with him outside of the pub.”

Mary looks at him for a long moment, and John begins to wonder if he has finally been caught out. But then she frowns and says, “That’s too bad, I thought he was definitely going to quit this time,”
“Yeah, me too.” John agrees quickly and then dashes up the stairs towards the safety of their empty bedroom, afraid to linger around his wife for a moment longer.

* 

They continue to meet each other at the coffee shop sometimes, when they aren’t able to go to Sherlock’s house because his father has stumbled back to sleep off his current bender. John hates these times the most, because he knows at the end of the night Sherlock has nowhere else to go but home. If Sherlock goes there at all. Sometimes he makes vague allusions to staying out all night, hunting through skips in back alleys for random things or breaking into medical offices to use their equipment.

John is afraid to ask for details and Sherlock doesn’t seem too keen on telling him, so it just gets left alone.

What John doesn’t leave alone, though, is Sherlock’s smoking habit.

“Here,” he states one night without preamble as he walks up to their usual table at the coffee shop and sets down a large box in front of Sherlock before taking a seat.

Sherlock eyes it warily, not touching it. “What is it?” he asks skeptically. John can tell once again that he still isn’t used to being given things without expecting anything in return. John doesn’t know exactly what kind of life Sherlock led before John met him, before the seldom-mentioned rehab. John often wonders how a kid as young as Sherlock and with nothing but what his brother gave him to pay for bills would have the money for drugs, and—truthfully—sometimes John is afraid to ask.

“Nicotine patches,” John says succinctly, with a nod of his head.


He tries not to get frustrated, but Sherlock does like to make it hard sometimes. “I know,” John answers slowly. “That’s exactly why I got them for you. So you don’t have to smoke anymore.”

Sherlock stares at him from across the table and John meets his gaze directly, trying not to be intimidated by a sixteen year old boy in need of a haircut, but he can tell that Sherlock is doing that thing—reading him intimately—and John knows that whatever Sherlock is going to say next is going to sting a bit.

“It’s never bothered you before,” he says, almost as soon as John has finished his previous thought. “Something’s changed.” There is a short pause before, “Mary has made some sort of comment about it.” He says John’s wife’s name like it tastes bad in his mouth.

John knows it’s pointless to lie, so he doesn’t bother. “Well, yeah,” he confesses, and he tries not to fidget in his chair. “I had kind of gotten used to the smell, but she noticed that I’ve been coming home reeking of cigarette smoke. I had to lie to her and say that Mike started up again.”

Sherlock narrows his light green eyes at him as if to say that he doesn’t care at all if John has been put out by this. He doesn’t speak for a moment and the longer John sits there and stares back at him, the more he can see something dangerous forming on Sherlock’s face.

“So you want me to quit smoking so that it doesn’t bother Mary any longer?” Sherlock finally asks him, his voice dark and low in the quiet of the coffee shop. John has a sudden sinking feeling of
horror and realises that this conversation is about to take a turn for the worst unless he does something about it.

“No, of course not!” John assures him quickly and somewhat loudly. He looks around to be sure he hasn’t brought any attention to them and turns back to Sherlock, lowering his voice. “I want you to quit for you. It’s not healthy, you know that. A kid your age shouldn’t be smoking as much as you do.”

Sherlock is still looking at him with a murderous glint in his eye, so John decides to be completely honest with him, embarrassing as it might be to say what he has been thinking for months, every time he sees Sherlock light up. “And,” he says, blushing and looking away from Sherlock, down at the table where his hands are resting. “I want you to quit for me. Because I don’t want anything to happen to you.” When he stops talking and doesn’t hear any mocking criticism, he dares a glance up. Sherlock is looking at him in surprise and John can’t help but smile.

“Besides, I could live without the taste when I kiss you,” he adds jokingly, but Sherlock doesn’t seem to want to be distracted. Sherlock looks down at the box again warily, grabbing it with one hand and fiddling with it, and he looks almost anxious.

“For you?” Sherlock asks him, looking up at John and biting his lip.

John smiles and wants so badly to lean across the table and kiss him, but he knows they have already pushed their luck with public displays of affection at the coffee shop. So he reaches a hand out to run his fingers along Sherlock’s bottom lip instead, softly but quickly.

“Yeah,” he answers, dropping his hand back down to the table. “For me.”

Sherlock blushes at John’s gentle touch, still unused to such treatment from anyone, and lowers his head to try to hide it. He doesn’t look at John as he gives a nod, agreeing to try the patches. And since Sherlock isn’t looking at him anyway, John takes the opportunity to beam proudly at his boy, tangling their feet together underneath the table as he leans back in his chair and drinks his tea.

Sherlock isn’t at school the next day and John tries not to worry, he really does. He knows that if Sherlock misses a day of school it doesn’t necessarily mean that anything has happened to him, but he can’t help thinking of Sherlock’s alcoholic, abusive father or the fact that the kid seems to get into all sorts of trouble on a regular basis.

So instead of panicking, John sends Sherlock a text that is responded to in a timely manner and with a relieving, if somewhat vague, answer.

John doesn’t worry too much for the rest of the day.

He doesn’t have Sherlock’s class the next day. Sherlock texts him at the end of the school day to say that he can’t meet John at his house later because he is busy, so John assumes that Sherlock has been at school all day and tries not to be disappointed that he won’t be seeing his lover for another day. He has Sherlock’s class tomorrow, after all, and maybe he can convince the flighty teen to at least meet him at the coffee shop later if they still aren’t able to go to Sherlock’s house.

But Sherlock isn’t in his class the next day, either.

Now John doesn’t even try not to panic. As quickly as he possibly can, he finishes his lesson for the day and passes out classwork to his students. When they are all busy and quiet, not paying him any attention, he sits down at his desk and shoots a quick text over to Sherlock, waiting impatiently
for him to respond.

Thankfully Sherlock’s answer is quick in coming—a short, strangely worded response that has John frowning down at his mobile. He makes the decision to head over to Sherlock’s house after school but it does nothing to alleviate his worries until the end of the day.

John is out of the building and in his car not long after the bell rings shrilly at the end of the lesson. He makes the drive over to Sherlock’s house and lets out a huge sigh of relief when he sees that Sherlock’s father is, indeed, not home. But then he frowns.

If Sherlock’s father isn’t at home terrorising him, then where has he been for the past few days?

John pulls into the drive and turns his car off, hurrying to the front door. He thinks about knocking, but decides to just try the handle. It turns easily, the door opening unimpeded.

John’s heart suddenly jumps into his throat and his senses kick into overdrive. He slips inside the door and shuts it silently behind him, listening intently for any noises in the house. From the back, through the kitchen towards Sherlock’s bedroom, he hears thumping noises and a strange, low muttering. He frowns and makes his way quietly through the house, body tensing and drawing tight.

When he gets to Sherlock’s bedroom door, he takes a moment to listen, wanting to gauge the situation. He can still hear the mumbling—a low drone of sound that John can barely make words out of—and he recognises the voice as Sherlock’s. John wonders for a moment if there is someone else in the room who the teen is talking to, but it doesn’t seem like there is. Sherlock is muttering broken, half-sentences in a way that he would never speak around another person, and when he asks a question he ends up answering himself, all in a low rumble of quick words that John can barely understand.

No less worried now, John decides to knock on the door lightly before opening it, letting Sherlock know that he is there instead of just barging in on him. When John knocks, he hears the mumbling stop suddenly. As he opens the bedroom door and peeks inside, he is surprised by what he sees.

Sherlock is standing at his bookcase, back towards John but head turned towards the door. At first glance he looks disheveled, but John doesn’t have the chance to study him over—his gaze is drawn immediately to Sherlock’s desk, bedside table, and window sill, where every inch of available space is taken up by mugs of tea in various stages of consumption.

“John?” he hears Sherlock ask, bringing his attention back to the teen. “What are you doing here?”

And that’s when John notices that Sherlock is wearing the same clothes that John had seen him in the last time they had been together. He is surprised, to say the least, but knows that Sherlock absolutely loathes doing his laundry, so it isn’t a stretch to assume that he is just re-wearing some of his outfits in a desperate attempt to not have to do the wash. Which is fine, but it doesn’t explain why Sherlock is now darting across his room, going over to his desk to check something in one of the many notebooks littering any space left open by the tea cups before dashing off to his bedside table where there is a congealed mass of something disturbing-looking sitting amongst dirty mugs. He seems to have completely forgotten that he has asked John a question and should be waiting for John’s response.

John stares at him for a moment in shock. Over the months, he has seen Sherlock in an assortment of moods and strange situations, but he hasn’t seen anything quite like this. Sherlock won’t stop moving, and he has resumed mumbling to himself, running his hands through his hair twitchily and adding to the disaster of it as he wanders amongst his mess while talking to no one.
“Sherlock,” John says, but the brunet doesn’t pay any attention to him; he continues to flit around the room restlessly, speaking about the poisonous toxins found in certain species of flowers and other things that John can’t follow. “Look at me,” John orders, and the volume of his voice and the sharp tone bring Sherlock up short. He turns to stare at John and the man looks at Sherlock, really looks.

The clothes that John confirms Sherlock was wearing the other day are crumpled with several days’ worth of wrinkles and a variety of tea stains, and Sherlock’s hair is a frightful mess of unshapely frizz and tangles. His eyes are disturbingly red-rimmed with dark circles underneath them that make him look troublingly sickly. He is paler than normal, which is worrying on its own, and the redness of his eyes stands out starkly against the white of his skin.

John hates that he has to ask, but he knows that he needs to. He has seen his fair share of addicts come through hospitals where he has worked, and he recognises that twitchy, edgy look with a sinking feeling. “Are you using again?” John asks, and his voice and the look he gives Sherlock are both stern and hard, trying to cover up the fear he feels.

“No,” Sherlock answers him quickly, tone shaky and too loud for the small room. “Of course not.”

But John doesn’t buy it. Of course John doesn’t buy it.

Sherlock tries to turn away from him, to hide from John’s unwavering gaze, but the man won’t let him. He enters the room and walks towards Sherlock, reaching a hand out quickly to wrap around Sherlock’s bony wrist and my God this kid needs to eat more, he thinks suddenly. John makes a mental note to buy some groceries the next time he comes over but quickly pushes the thought aside for the problem at hand. “Don’t lie to me,” John growls out lowly, tugging Sherlock easily around so that he is facing John once again. “You look like hell.”

Sherlock pulls his arm harshly out of John’s grasp and the man lets him go, not wanting to hurt him. Sherlock marches across the room petulantly and drops down into his desk chair in a huff. “Not using,” he tells John as he pulls his microscope towards him and shoves his face against the eyepiece. “Just haven’t slept.”

“What?” John asks, worriedly. With the way Sherlock looks, John knows that this isn’t the result of just a day or two without sleep. The kid looks like an absolute mess.

But Sherlock doesn’t seem to share John’s concern. “I haven’t slept,” he repeats agitatedly, not looking away from his microscope.

“In how long?” John snaps out, frustrated. He stalks across the room and grabs Sherlock’s shoulders, pushing him back in his desk chair and forcing Sherlock to look up at him. He wants to get a closer look at the brunet; exam him, put him to bed and tuck him in after feeding him up. He can’t believe how much he wants to take care of the great big idiot sitting in front of him.

But again, Sherlock doesn’t seem as worried about his answers as John is. He lets John turn him so that they are face to face, but he simply shrugs in response to John’s question. “Don’t know. What’s today?” he asks with a slight frown, as if he is trying to concentrate on something. “Wednesday?”

John looks at him in disbelief. “It’s Friday,” he breathes out, shocked.

“Then it’s been,” Sherlock looks off into the air vacantly, and his mouth moves slightly as if he is counting or calculating something in his head. “Four days. Maybe. Don’t really remember.” He shirks away from John’s grasp and turns back to his microscope.
“Fucking hell, Sherlock. Are you serious?” John asks, but Sherlock doesn’t answer him, doesn’t seem to even notice that John is there anymore. But John doesn’t care if Sherlock notices that he is there or not; he will make Sherlock notice that he is there. “You can’t do stuff like this!” he shouts out, at a loss. “It isn’t healthy!”

“Why can’t I?” Sherlock asks simply, as if he hasn’t heard what John has just said and he doesn’t find anything wrong with the situation. “I feel perfectly fine, I assure you. It’s all just transport, John. Eating, sleeping, they just slow down the brain. I don’t have time for them.”

John stares at the boy in front of him in stunned astonishment. He shakes his head even though he knows Sherlock isn’t looking at him. Sherlock can go on about how he doesn’t need food or sleep and how it’s all nothing but “transport”, but John knows better. He knows the effects that kind of treatment has on the body. “You look strung out,” he tells Sherlock honestly, voice harsh and full of anger. “I’m still not even sure that I believe that you aren’t on something.”

“Please,” Sherlock scoffs, gaze still glued to the eyepiece. “I haven’t even smoked in four days.” He twists his body around in what appears to be an uncomfortable-looking position and sticks his arm out towards John, face still pressed to his microscope. He pushes up the sleeve of his wrinkled button down and shows off his forearm. John tries to ignore the old, discolored scar-pattern of track marks and focus on the nicotine patches that Sherlock is showing him.

“Jesus, Sherlock, you’re only supposed to wear one at a time, you know!” he says sternly as he looks at the three squares on Sherlock’s pale skin in horror. He suddenly doesn’t have the slightest clue about what he is going to do with this boy. Sherlock Holmes is going to be the death of him, John is sure.

“It was a three patch problem,” Sherlock says with an indifferent shrug, as if John is just supposed to know what he is talking about. He drops his arm again and continues to not look at the older man.

“Sherlock, you can’t—” John tries again, but he suddenly realises that he has no words for how incredibly stupid the kid is being. “It’s not—”

He ends up giving up with a sigh of frustration and manhandling Sherlock out of his desk chair. Sherlock squawks indignantly at the rough treatment that John uses to lift him up, and John has to half-carry, half-fight Sherlock across the room and towards his bed.

“John!” Sherlock shouts out, struggling against the blond’s hold, but he is too thin and too tired to be any kind of a match for the ex-soldier. “I need to finish calculating the growth rate of that bacteria!”

“No, what you need is about 36 hours’ worth of sleep and a hot meal with a strong cup of tea when you wake up,” John corrects him, finally fighting Sherlock to the edge of his bed. He tries to slip out of John’s grasp, but the blond ends up wrapping his arms around the gangly, sharply-angled boy. John lifts him up awkwardly for a split second before dropping him back down on the bed hard enough to make Sherlock bounce against the mattress.

“This is ridiculous!” Sherlock continues to yell as he tries to wrestle against John some more, but the man manages to wrap the sheets around him haphazardly. Sherlock keeps trying to struggle, but John can see the fight quickly leaving him, being replaced by sleepiness. Sherlock has been in bed for little more than a few minutes, John pinning him down to make sure he stays, when he begins to drift off into slumber underneath John’s heavy weight.

With a relieved sigh, John gently releases his hold on Sherlock, keeping his hands on the teen’s
body softly for a few more minutes until John knows for sure that Sherlock has actually fallen asleep. Then he walks silently across the room to turn off the light, turning on the bedside lamp so that he can easily check up on Sherlock a few times before he leaves without disturbing his slumber.

In the soft light of the lamp, John turns back to look down at Sherlock now sleeping deeply in the bed. The sheets are a tangled mess around him from his earlier struggling, and his mouth is hanging open widely. John knows he will end up drooling all over himself in a few minutes, but he thinks that Sherlock looks too adorable to try to help remedy the problem. John bends down over him and tugs the sheet out from under the dead weight of the sleeping brunet, taking the end of it and tucking Sherlock in securely. It is a small journey from there to kissing him on the forehead, and John can’t resist the temptation. His lips linger on Sherlock’s cool skin for a moment, breathing in against Sherlock’s hair. His face scrunches slightly and he makes a mental note to get Sherlock in the shower after he wakes up.

John pulls away from him slightly, looking down on Sherlock and smiling fondly at his lover. He doesn’t understand how someone so smart can do such stupid things. Sherlock is completely unhinged, and John feels more like his handler at times than his lover. He shakes his head and his smile grows wider. He can’t believe his own luck sometimes; he has his very own mad genius now. His hand runs softly up and down the length of Sherlock’s side, careful not to wake him, stopping on his bony hip and lingering there for a moment.

John will leave soon, because he knows that Sherlock will most likely be out until at least the morning. But he’ll come back tomorrow morning, telling Mary he is going over to Mike’s so that he can help John start organising his next lesson plan. If Sherlock’s dad hasn’t returned home during the middle of the night, John will stay and fix Sherlock a nice, hearty fry up for breakfast with a hot cup of tea. He’ll make sure that Sherlock gets cleaned up and fed before being sure Sherlock gets caught up on all of his schoolwork and is rested and well enough to go back to school come Monday. He doesn’t want to risk Sherlock getting in trouble for truancy, and he thinks Sherlock is probably pushing the limit now.

With a long suffering sigh, John leans in once more to give Sherlock a goodbye kiss on the cheek, and Sherlock snuffles and snorts under him. John smiles down at the drooling boy and hates that he has to leave him.
We Have the Kerosene and the Desire

Chapter Notes

Warnings: This chapter gets slightly heavier on the praise kink than it has in past chapters (here’s where that slight Daddy kink tag might come into play for the first time, but I really think that it is just a twisted praise kink at this point in the story. Nothing about the daddy kink is mentioned other than the names John calls Sherlock.) This chapter is also pretty heavy on the dirty talk, but let’s just go ahead and make that a default warning for the rest of the story…John has a filthy mouth. I don’t apologize…

Chapter was beta'd and Brit-picked by Indelible_Ink, but, as always, I rewrote half of it and now it is almost completely different from what she edited. Naturally, all mistakes are my own. Most rewrites were last minute, so if there is a glaring continuity error, please feel free to politely point it out and I will change it as soon as possible.

Chapter title is taken from lyrics to the song Heartbeat by The Fray. Thanks so much for all of the support and love everyone is giving this fic. It really means a lot to me!

It is late morning by the time John is able to make it back to Sherlock’s the next day. Mary wakes up early and makes breakfast for them (something she hardly ever does on the weekends, nowadays). John only manages to pick at the food on his plate, eating the very last thing on his mind. Afterwards, Mary keeps John around a bit longer with meaningless chatter and small household chores. He is fidgety and restless the whole time, but he figures it is all for the best; Sherlock needs as much sleep as he can get, anyway.

When John is able to leave his house, he stops by the shop to pick up a few things before finally arriving at Sherlock’s. By the time John slips inside Sherlock’s house, using the key he nicked from Sherlock’s room the night before, Sherlock is still sleeping like a dead thing. John rouses him, though, because he knows that Sherlock doesn’t need as much sleep as other people, and too much rest makes him feel muzzy and heavy-headed and usually gives him a headache. John wakes him slowly, with soft murmured words and gentle hands, and Sherlock comes out of his slumber like he’s struggling through syrup. He opens his eyes groggily, giving John a sleepy smile, and John chuckles softly at him and kisses him on his forehead.

“Go take a shower. You smell like sweat and stale tea,” he whispers against Sherlock’s dirty curls. “I’m going to make you breakfast, and you’re going to eat it.”

Sherlock grumbles in a sleep-gravelly voice but doesn’t disagree, and pulls himself out of bed to do as John says. When he’s gone into his en suite, not even bothering to close the door, John shakes his head in exasperation and makes his way to the kitchen. Once there, John has to carefully navigate his way around to be sure he doesn’t set anything on fire while he cooks—eggs, beans, and sausage with toast, just about the only thing he can make without burning. It is just about finished by the time Sherlock comes out, looking well-rested and scrubbed pink and fresh from his shower in a pair of pyjama bottoms and an old faded tee. Sherlock makes tea in silence while John finishes their breakfast and they serve each other, setting plates and cups on the worktop as they stand up to eat because the kitchen table is covered in all sorts of debris. John thinks it is endearingly domestic and he smiles at Sherlock, who blushes at him in silence.
John eats his meal with relish, hungrier now then he was earlier when he was at home with Mary. He is happy to see that Sherlock eats most of his meal, too, leaving the hard crusts of his toast but eating the soggy, buttery middle that he soaked in his beans, and finishing most of his sausage except for the two ends. He picks at his eggs, though, and even gentle urgings by John can’t get him to eat much of them. John knows Sherlock isn’t a big eater and is picky about the food he does eat, so he doesn’t push it too hard. He is just glad Sherlock ate what he did. John bought bran muffins at the shop, as well, chocolate ones which he gives to Sherlock now, and protein bars that he will leave when he goes. Sherlock tears into a muffin and eats almost all of it as John smiles warmly at him, and by the time he drops it to his almost empty plate he is complaining that he is so full his stomach very nearly hurts.

Now that Sherlock is cleaned and fed, John thinks he looks a hundred times better, skin a healthy-looking pink colour and the dark, tired-looking circles under his eyes nearly disappeared. John knows, though, that Sherlock had put his body through a lot recently, and that he needs rest. He looks across the worktop at Sherlock, where they have stood eating their breakfast, and asks, “Want to go back to bed?”

Sherlock nods slightly, curls still damp from his shower, but smiles slyly. “Only if you come with me, though.”

John huffs a laugh. “You’re incorrigible, you know that?” he asks. But they both know the answer because John is throwing his last piece of toast down on his plate, already forgotten, and following Sherlock back into his room.

There has been a steady progression in their sexual endeavors to date. John has tried—honest to God—to take things slow, and he feels like he has succeeded for the most part. He is somewhat proud of himself for not letting Sherlock dictate how their sex life advances, but mostly he is proud of himself for being able to maintain his control when he has Sherlock underneath him, writhing and panting and begging for John to do something to him.

So, when they are back on Sherlock’s bed, with Sherlock’s soft pyjamas pulled completely off and his skin smelling so clean from his recent shower, John doesn’t feel the least bit guilty when he suddenly decides that he has had enough and he will simply die if he can’t put his hands on that last piece of Sherlock he has left untouched. Actually, he doesn’t feel anything other than need, arousal, want, heat, lips, breath, desire. Sherlock is so hard and desperate against him already as John barely begins to rut into his thigh, and John can’t take it for one second longer. John’s shaking hands come up to push his trousers and pants completely off for the first time but he keeps his button down shirt on, allowing Sherlock’s uncoordinated fingers to undo the buttons on it to show the white vest underneath but stopping him when Sherlock tries to push his hands underneath to get to more of John. John knows how he feels; Sherlock is naked under him but it’s still not enough skin, not enough touch, not enough.

“God, baby,” John moans into Sherlock’s mouth as he rolls his hips into the body below him. He can feel Sherlock’s hand between them, where he is pumping his own cock as John grinds himself into Sherlock’s leg. “I have to touch you. Please say I can touch you. Let me, let me,” he mumbles, begs. He doesn’t even really know what he is saying, he is so out of his mind with desire. “I can make you feel so good, I promise. Please, baby, please.”

“Yes,” Sherlock moans without a second thought. “Do it. I want it.” Sherlock releases his own cock, leaving the stiff member bare and pulling his hands up over his head so that he is completely spread out for John’s eyes, John’s touch.

John thinks he may go mad from the sight of Sherlock before him, but he fumbles stupidly with the
It is the first time that John has fully touched the boy’s bare cock while Sherlock is aroused, and the skin feels so smooth and hot beneath the tips of his index, middle finger, and thumb. He can’t stop the groan that rips out of his throat. “God, you’re so hard, you lovely thing,” he says, and he grips Sherlock’s cock tighter, all of his fingers now, his whole hand stroking up and down the long, slender shaft once, and Sherlock positively keens.

John moans at the feel of Sherlock in his hand, at the unbelievably arousing sound of him, and grips him harder, pressing himself against Sherlock’s leg to relieve some of the pressure on his own cock. John drags his hand down Sherlock, from base to tip, smearing precome and lube, and notes Sherlock’s intense reaction to his touch, the curly head thrown back against the pillow, the eyes squeezed shut, the teeth clenched. Sherlock’s hips are straining forward, trying to thrust into John’s grip but not knowing if that is allowed. His thighs are quivering and the muscles in his belly are clenching and flexing. Sensitive. He’s so incredibly sensitive to everything John does to him. John leans back slightly so that he can start a steady rhythm of stroking with one hand, no more teasing, while his other dips down to gently cup Sherlock’s balls, his fingers snaking farther to lightly massage the sensitive area behind them teasingly for only a moment before lifting back up to cup them again.

John smirks as the touch drives Sherlock so out of his mind that he lets out a surprised huff of air, eyes going wide, but the ability to speak apparently lost as his mouth opens and only a strangled noise comes out. John kisses him to let him know it’s all right.

“You’re beautiful, perfect,” John tells him, whispers the words against Sherlock’s open mouth. “My perfect boy.”

John looks down at Sherlock’s naked body, spread out in the bright morning light, and delights in knowing that he has been eating slightly more, ever since John has met him. Since they have started this relationship and John has felt more responsible for Sherlock, John has made it a point to make sure that Sherlock is eating slightly more. Although John knows not enough time has passed for him to put on much weight, John fancies he can see a small difference. Sherlock will say that it is all just “transport”, that none of it matters, but it certainly matters to John. It’s all part of Sherlock; body and mind—there’s no differentiating. And right now, the care of Sherlock belongs to John. That’s all that matters. The care of that remarkable mind and that fragile transport. In the mid-morning light that is shining in through Sherlock’s window, John can see just how perfect that transport really is. They have never been together like this, during this time of day, when the sun is blazing so brightly on what they are doing, hiding nothing, and John wants to savour it, drown in it. He glances down the length of their bodies and looks his fill. Sherlock’s cock is still slick from the lubricant that John had spread on him earlier, and John’s hand slides smoothly up and down the hard flesh. He brings his thumb around to press against Sherlock’s frenulum on each pass, squeezing the head softly when he reaches the tip.

Beneath him, Sherlock is absolutely mindless. His hands are clenching around the pillow by his head, balling up so tight around the fabric that his fingers are turning white. His body is taut, arching up into John’s touch as much as he possibly can. Sherlock’s nipples are hard, dark pink pebbles that John can’t help but nibble on. He swirls his tongue over one in a mirror image of his fingers swirling over the tip of Sherlock’s cock, his tongue flicking across the hardened peak as John’s thumb strokes over the slit at the crown of Sherlock’s prick and drags more slickness across the head, smearing it around. John’s other hand comes up to pinch lightly at his other nipple, pressing soft kisses to the sensitive nub under his lips. Sherlock gasps at the conflicting sensations and John feels the boy’s prick jump in his hand. “Yes,
John, please,” he groans, voice completely wrecked. “Oh, please.”

John doesn’t exactly know what it is that Sherlock is asking for, but it doesn’t really matter; he’ll give him whatever it is. Anything, everything. It all belongs to Sherlock now.

He drags his mouth away from Sherlock’s chest to kiss him again, dipping his tongue in between Sherlock’s lips as the boy pants and moans against his lips. John loves kissing Sherlock when he is like this, pliant and so out of his mind that he doesn’t even really kiss John back, he just opens up for John, lets John in, let’s John take whatever he wants.

And, oh, how John takes.

His hand tightens around Sherlock’s cock and the boy’s hips jerk up. A wail escapes Sherlock’s throat but John swallows it, relishing the feel of the vibration against his lips. He pants against Sherlock’s open mouth as he thrusts into Sherlock’s thigh to the same tempo that he is stroking him.

“Close,” Sherlock suddenly whimpers out, and it sounds almost pained. “S-so close.”

“Yeah, come on, darling. Come for me,” John moans, and his hand speeds up, the slick squish of lubricant mixing with the sound of their heavy breaths.

“Oh, God,” Sherlock says, and he screws his eyes shut as his body goes tight and rigid against John’s. “Oh my God!”

He comes with a gasp and a wild buck into John’s hand. John tries to remember that Sherlock will be sensitive after his orgasm, and so he eases up on his grip, slows his strokes and lets Sherlock thrust into his clenched fist at his own speed as he rides out his climax. Sherlock’s come is warm on John’s skin, and it drips down his hand, making everything exquisitely slick.

“Good boy,” John whispers into his ear, praising him and kissing his temple sweetly. God, how he goes crazy over Sherlock. “There’s my good boy.”

“You,” Sherlock pants out, turning his face towards John to kiss him, his body relaxing deeply after his orgasm, muscles going loose and lax. “Now you.”

“Yeah,” John says, and he resumes the thrusts against Sherlock’s thigh that he had forgotten in his desire to bring Sherlock off. He rubs his hands over Sherlock’s smooth body, touching everything that he can and reveling in the softness of it all. “You feel so good, sweetheart.”

Sherlock smiles lazily as he lies limply underneath John, letting the man use his body as he wishes. “You make me feel this way,” he tells John. “I love how you make me come. My whole body shuts down and it’s absolute bliss.”

John groans at Sherlock’s words and thrusts harder.

“Kiss me,” Sherlock whispers to him, lazy smile still in place. “I want you to kiss me while you come.”

And John obliges, pressing his lips to Sherlock’s messily. He is so close that he knows it won’t take long, and when Sherlock moans against his mouth and brings his hands up to tangle in John’s short hair he knows that it’s all over.

“Oh fuck, baby, I’m coming,” he chokes out against Sherlock’s lips in a rush as he feels his orgasm tightening in his belly and then releasing through his entire body. He slows his thrusts against
Sherlock’s leg, pressing his length up against the hard muscles underneath Sherlock’s soft skin and trapping his cock there between their bodies. It’s as close to feeling like he is inside Sherlock as he allows himself, and it is absolute heaven.

They lie there for a long time, wrapped up in each other’s arms as their breaths return to normal and their heart rates slow. The sweat on John’s skin dries in the cool air of Sherlock’s bedroom and the mess of their collective semen begins to feel uncomfortable, but neither one moves. It is so calm and quiet and absolutely perfect lying there with Sherlock that John is actually drifting off to sleep when the teen breaks the silence and jars him awake.

“You call me names.”

“What?” John asks, sleepy and confused, because he thinks he may have missed the first part of Sherlock’s sentence, the comment is so randomly said.

“You call me names,” Sherlock repeats, slower, as if he is talking to an idiot. “No one has ever called me those things before.” He isn’t looking at John but instead gazing straight up into his ceiling.

“Oh, er…” John stares at Sherlock, wide-eyed and caught off guard. He’s never really noticed that he calls Sherlock anything. He’s never thought that Sherlock might not like being called those types of things—

“Some of them are quite ridiculous. They sound like something you would call a woman or a child,” Sherlock says acerbically. The edge of his tone is biting, but something underneath it is soft and vulnerable. He still isn’t looking at John.

“Oh,” is all John can think to say, his stomach twisting worryingly. He honestly hasn’t realised he has been calling Sherlock anything, the diminutives seeming to slip out of his mouth of their own accord, naturally. He worries that he has offended Sherlock, made him feel demeaned or objectified without attempting to. John has always been rather vocal and sentimental when it comes to relationships, always enjoying the physical and emotional representation that someone was his. He’s never really had to censor himself when it comes to his relationships with other people and he’s rather new at all of this. (Of course, he’s never been with anyone as tetchy as Sherlock, either.) He guesses he’s just been doing a shit job of it. “Er, do you want me to stop?” he asks quietly, awkwardly, because he doesn’t know what else to say, mostly.

He hopes this isn’t the case, though. He rather likes calling his lovers pet names, doting on them and making them feel special through something that’s shared only between the two of them, like a special pet name or an inside joke, and he hasn’t been able to do that with Mary in years. He hasn’t wanted to do that with Mary, in all honesty, but with Sherlock it is different. He wants to share everything with Sherlock, romantic and stupidly sentimental as it all is. He can see how this is exactly the sort of thing that Sherlock would hate, though, and he tries to hide a wince as his stomach knots itself into ropes.

Sherlock is silent for a few moments as he thinks about John’s question, staring up at the ceiling of his bedroom and frowning at it, as if contemplating some great scientific formula. Finally, Sherlock turns to look at him and he simply stares at John for a long minute. He doesn’t speak, he hardly even breathes. John feels once again as if he is being dissected by Sherlock’s gaze, and all John can think is that Sherlock’s eyes are a striking blue-silver today. When he answers, his voice is so soft that John almost misses it. “No,” he says, face flushing a dark red. “No, you don’t have to stop.”

John lets out a small, quiet breath that he didn’t realise he had been holding and smiles at Sherlock
fondly.

“Don’t worry, sweetheart,” he says, reaching a hand out to caress Sherlock’s soft cheek. “Then I
won’t.”

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“Why don’t we use condoms?” Sherlock asks him one day as they are snogging on Sherlock’s bed,
and John nearly has a heart attack at the bluntness of the question.

“Christ,” John says, pulling away from the love-bite he has been nibbling into Sherlock’s clavicle
—low, where no one will see it. He has gotten as far as divesting Sherlock of his shirt, though they
are both still completely clothed other than that.

But if Sherlock understands that he has once again done something a little off of normal social
standards, he doesn’t seem to care. He simply stares at John and waits patiently for an answer.

John sighs and sits up, knowing that once Sherlock has gotten that look in his eyes, he is gearing up
for a discussion that will eventually turn into a row because Sherlock wants something that John is
not willing to give him.

“Well,” John begins, licking his lips and tasting Sherlock’s skin on them for a fleeting second.
Sherlock hasn’t smoked in days and John has loved that when they kiss, there is only the taste of
Sherlock, sweet and light and wonderfully delicious. “We haven’t had to use them because no one
has been penetrated and we haven’t done anything that would lead us to internally exchange fluids
through any bodily orifices yet. We’ve just been using our hands and we haven’t let our semen
come into contact with any bodily openings.” He tries not to blush, he really does. There is no
need for it, he knows. He is a doctor, he teaches Advanced Biology to hundreds of horny,
adolescent secondary schoolers. But there is just something about having this conversation with
his sixteen year old lover that is slightly embarrassing.

“So you do plan for us to use them, eventually?” Sherlock badgers, and suddenly John knows
where this is heading.

“Yes, Sherlock,” he says, frowning. “Of course. As soon as we move on to doing more…intimate
things, we’ll need to. It’s only safe.”

“But what if I don’t want to?” Sherlock asks, scowling.

“Well, what you want isn’t the only thing that matters, now is it?” John can’t help the snarky
reply. He is afraid that if he doesn’t put his foot down and make things clear about this situation
right now, then he is going to end up caving to Sherlock like he has so many times in the past.
“I’m not going to risk our health just because you don’t want to be reasonable about this.”

“But, John—” Sherlock starts to argue, but the man cuts him off, voice sharp and hard.

“It’s not open for discussion, Sherlock. That’s final.”

John watches as Sherlock’s mouth snaps shut and his eyes go wide, and John tries not to let a
victorious smile creep onto his face.

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Thankfully, Sherlock doesn’t bring up the use of condoms again the next time they are together.
John will never admit it to the teen, but he really doesn’t think he would have been able to hold out
for long if Sherlock had pushed the issue. In all actuality, ever since Sherlock brought up the idea of not using condoms, John can’t stop thinking about what it would feel like to come in Sherlock’s mouth, what it would be like to have Sherlock take everything John gave him and swallow it down, or how Sherlock’s arse would look leaking John’s come out of his stretched hole.

The thoughts are often too much for John to bear.

Especially during times like this, when the two are frotting up against one another and John is already so close to climaxing. His hands are all over Sherlock’s body, and he wants nothing more than to grab both of their cocks in one of his hands, rub them together to feel Sherlock’s hard length against his own. God, he wants so many things, so many things that he shouldn’t, he knows he shouldn’t. He wants it all.

But he has promised himself that he will wait, he will be patient. For Sherlock’s sake. Even though the impetuous youth beside him doesn’t want his patience; even though Sherlock makes it so hard for John to hold back.

Sherlock’s hands are currently underneath John’s vest, driving him to distraction. His long fingers are dancing across John’s lower stomach and sides, clenching and pinching little bits of skin as Sherlock’s grip tightens whenever John touches a particularly sensitive area of Sherlock’s body. Sherlock is naked under him and John’s trousers and pants are off. He has finally conceded to taking off his button down for the first time since they have been together, but only because the vest he has on underneath is short-sleeved, and so it covers the top half of his upper arms, hiding the better part of his body still. Sherlock’s hands are restless, however, and he keeps pushing them farther and farther under John’s shirt, creeping up his stomach and towards the centre of his chest, trying to get to his nipples. John has to constantly release his own hold on Sherlock’s body just so that he can grab Sherlock’s hands and bring them back down before Sherlock finds the edges of his gunshot wound. There are other, smaller scars, but John is not half as concerned with keeping Sherlock away from them as he is the bullet hole in his shoulder, where Sherlock’s hands inevitably try to wander.

Whether Sherlock knows he’s doing it or not, he still is not happy that the older man is trying to confine his touches to John’s stomach, sides and lower back. Sherlock growls against John’s mouth as they kiss and rolls them over so that John is suddenly lying on his back, Sherlock hovering above him. Sherlock’s weight is so slight that John knows he would be able to flip them again in an instant if he wanted. It wouldn’t even be difficult. But John rather likes the feeling of Sherlock on top of him, likes the way Sherlock’s slightly long, curly hair falls forward into his eyes when he looks down at John.

“Take this off,” Sherlock pants as he tugs at the hem of John’s undershirt. “John, take it off.”

John shakes his head. “It stays, sweetheart. It has to stay.”

“I don’t care, you know,” Sherlock tells him, bending low to bite at the soft flesh of John’s neck.

“I care,” John groans out, his hips bucking of their own volition. “It stays.”

Sherlock huffs in frustration but soon forgets about ridding John of his vest for trying to get other things.

“Then can I touch you?” Sherlock asks him, and for a moment John thinks that he is still talking about John’s scar. But the miscommunication is quickly cleared up when he continues, “I want to know what your cock feels like. I want to do for you what you do for me. I want you to know how you take me apart.”
John can’t help the way his hips thrust up into Sherlock’s once again. Sherlock isn’t as safety-conscious as John is and so he is letting their cocks slide together slickly every now and then, precome dragging all over the other’s shaft as they continue to writhe against each other. John can’t really be arsed to care anymore.

“Fuck, Sherlock,” John groans out as he lifts his head to catch Sherlock’s lips in a kiss. He wants everything Sherlock has just said and more. So much more. “Yeah, do it. Touch me, come on.”

Sherlock’s eyes light up at John’s acquiescence. A completely devilish and wicked grin spreads across his pale face and he slides a bit down to sit lower on John’s thighs so that he can reach between them to be in a better position to take John’s thick cock in his hand for the first time.

It’s amazing. John can’t remember the last time he has felt someone’s hand on him that wasn’t his own, but he is positive that it has never felt this good before. John moans loudly, shamelessly, as Sherlock lets out a little surprised gasp.

“You’re huge,” Sherlock whispers, and John has to remind himself that this is the first time Sherlock has ever touched someone else’s cock. He looks down the length of his body to see Sherlock’s fingers squeeze his prick right underneath the crown of his head, where it is thickest before it tapers down again towards the base of his groin. “Will it…hurt?” Sherlock asks as he releases his grip and rubs his fingers up and down John’s shaft, too loose to give John any sort of release but still so, so good. “When you finally take me?” He sounds a little frightened and John fights back the cloudy haze of his arousal to reassure Sherlock. John doesn’t want the boy to ever be scared of anything that they do together.

“No, baby, no,” John soothes. He manages to still his hips and brings his hands up to caress the sides of Sherlock’s face. His skin is so smooth and soft and John wonders at the beauty of it every time, the light smattering of freckles that can only be seen from this close up, along with the strange, different coloured speckles in Sherlock’s eyes that are responsible for their ever-changing hue.

Simply gorgeous. John doesn’t know how he ever got so lucky.

He lifts his head again and stretches up to place a single soft kiss on Sherlock’s lips. “I would never hurt you,” he promises Sherlock, tone gentle and serious. “I’ll take such good care of you before I fuck you, it won’t hurt you at all. I never want to hurt you.”

Sherlock smiles at that and resumes his slow strokes along John’s cock. The pressure is steady and the movements are completely uniform, as if Sherlock is unsure of how he should be touching John, but the man doesn’t care. Just the feel of Sherlock’s warm skin on his prick alone has always been enough to get him off. He knows that there won’t be a problem in achieving orgasm.

“It will be amazing and you’ll love it,” John continues to tell Sherlock as they move against one another again. “You’ll never want me to stop fucking you. I’ll never want to stop fucking you,” he promises. He can feel Sherlock’s breathing go ragged as John props himself up on his arms and holds himself there, sitting up with Sherlock in his lap so that John can be closer to him. Their cocks are pressed together, Sherlock’s hand working John’s prick between them, and John buries his face in Sherlock’s neck while he kisses and whispers against the soft skin there.

“God, Sherlock, I think about it all the time. Think about what you’ll feel like, wrapped around my cock,” he moans at the thought of it, and Sherlock releases a shaky breath by John’s ear, his hand tightening around John’s stiff prick. “Sometimes I think about it at night, when I’m in bed, and it drives me so wild that I can’t help touching myself. I wank to thoughts about you while I lie in bed next to my wife. You’ve wrecked me, Sherlock.”
It’s true, it’s so true, nothing has ever been more true. The strokes of Sherlock’s hand speed up and John thinks he might die from the bliss of it.

“Oh, God, but this,” John mumbles, and he doesn’t even know what he is saying anymore, “this is amazing. So good. I won’t be able to stop thinking about this all night. And when I go back home and sit down at the table to have dinner with Mary, I’m going to touch myself under the tablecloth and remember what your hand felt like on my cock.” John’s own hand reaches between the tight press of their bodies and grabs hold of Sherlock’s cock. It is awkward because there isn’t enough space and Sherlock’s moving hand doesn’t leave much room for John to manoeuvre, but he manages to grip Sherlock’s prick tightly, letting the movements of Sherlock’s body be enough for the boy to tease himself with John’s own hand. Sherlock is so turned on that John’s palm is covered in precome after only seconds, and John knows Sherlock is close.

“I’m going to touch myself right there in front of my wife and think about you the whole time, and what you do to me,” John whispers, a dark, filthy promise. “And then, when I get close to finishing in my trousers, underneath the table, I’ll think of this moment right here, when I finally made you come and you threw your head back and made that little sound. When you gasped for air because I took everything from you, I took it all, and you let me. I’ll come at dinner right in front of my wife thinking about you coming in my hand.”

“Oh!” Sherlock’s orgasm overtakes him without any warning, only the small sound of surprise that escapes his plump, full lips. As he climaxes, his hand clenches down involuntarily around John’s cock and the pressure is suddenly too much, perfect, just right, and John comes almost instantly, revelling in the feel of his cock pulsing hot ribbons of liquid against Sherlock’s long, warm fingers.

“John, you’re absolutely filthy,” Sherlock says with a breathless chuckle as he recovers from his orgasm, flopping forward against John’s chest and causing them to fall back against the bed, heedless of John’s comfort. “I had no idea you had such a delightfully dirty imagination. I think I rather like it.” John can practically hear the wicked smile on Sherlock’s lips.

John laughs as well, cheeks flaming. He is glad that Sherlock is too busy rubbing his face against John’s clothed chest to see him. He hadn’t meant to say any of that. He doesn’t even know where it came from, really. John has never been as vocal in bed as he is with Sherlock, and he worries if one day he is going to say something that he will regret. But all he can do is hope not, because it seems he has no control over his own body when he is around Sherlock.

He shifts Sherlock off of him with a little groan and settles the brunet next to him on the bed. They lie against one another for a moment, and John lets himself enjoy the feel of Sherlock snuggling into his side and wrapping one thin arm around John’s chest, the other trapped beneath his own body. Sherlock’s fingers automatically drag their way over John’s sternum, across his shirt. Even though he is clothed, the vest is still thin and white, and Sherlock’s fingers roam over John’s pectoral and up to his shoulder, finding the edge of the gnarled scar and tracing it softly. He doesn’t ask to see it again, doesn’t make any mention of what he is doing at all, actually, and so John lets him continue. It is nice, after all, having someone touch him in such an intimate place. So nice, in fact, that he finds himself being lulled into a slight drowse. When the threat of sleep becomes too great, John decides that he should get up and clean off before heading out. He tries to sit up but Sherlock’s hand is a sudden pressure on his chest, pushing him back down.

“Stay,” he says to John, and it sounds so imperious that John can’t help but frown at him, mouth setting into a hard, thin line. Sherlock seems to realise this and so he repeats, softer, “Please, will you stay?”

John sighs and presses a kiss to Sherlock’s forehead, his sudden flash of anger forgotten in an

For once Sherlock seems to realise that it is not the time to argue with John, and so he stays thankfully silent, burying his face against John’s skin and clinging to the man tightly. John holds him for a few minutes longer before he starts to shift.

“I have to go,” he mumbles into Sherlock’s hair, and the statement shoots an indescribable pain through his heart.

Sherlock’s hold on him tightens briefly, and for a moment John doesn’t think that Sherlock will release him. But then the brunet’s arms go limp around him and Sherlock rolls off of John, looking away from him. “You don’t ‘have to’,” Sherlock tells him, and his voice is dejected, hurt. “You want to.”

John doesn’t really know what to say to that so he stretches out to kiss Sherlock sadly, and it feels like an apology. He sits up on the edge of the bed and bends down to the floor to pick up his trousers and pants. “I’ll come round earlier tomorrow, since I won’t be able to stay too late. I have dinner plans with Mary.”

That gets Sherlock’s attention. “Like a date?” he asks, twisting back around to look John in the face, and there is a deep frown marring his brow, thick black eyebrows drawn together unhappily.

“No,” John says, too quickly, and then winces. “Well, not really,” he backtracks. “We’re meeting Stamford and his wife at their house for a few drinks and then going out to dinner.”

“Like a double-date, then,” Sherlock states. He turns away from John to dig suddenly in a drawer on his bedside table, and his voice is emotionless and hollow. John watches him rummage through papers and junk before Sherlock finds what he is looking for: a smashed up box of nicotine patches. He pulls two out and quickly slaps them on his forearm, and John is smart enough to keep his mouth shut about it. “Both of you taking your cheating wives out for a night on the town. How quaint.” He sounds as if he thinks it’s anything but.

John doesn’t really know what to say to that, either, so he just bends down to give Sherlock another kiss, this one landing on Sherlock’s cheek because he doesn’t turn his head to meet John’s mouth. John’s lips press into a hard, thin line but he doesn’t say anything; he knows Sherlock is mad, even if he won’t admit it.

John wipes himself off with one of Sherlock’s old t-shirts and dresses quickly, leaving Sherlock’s house without another word.
“Stay just a little bit longer,” Sherlock tells him the next day as he lies sweating and naked on top of his duvet. He is on his stomach, heedless of the mess on his belly that he is now rubbing onto the bed sheets.

John bites back a sigh as he finishes dressing, doing up the flies of his trousers. He had known that this was coming. Still, he can’t say that he is equipped to deal with it. “You know I can’t,” John tells him, bending down to pick Sherlock’s shirt and boxers off of the floor, tossing them to him on the bed. He has a feeling that this is going to head south and he really doesn’t want to have a row with Sherlock while the teen is naked. “I told you yesterday that I have plans with Mary.”

“Cancel them,” Sherlock says simply as he sits up in bed and shimmies into his clothes, wiping the remainder of their semen off on a corner of his bed sheets before tugging his t-shirt down his torso. Then he stands quickly and walks out of his bedroom, leaving John to follow behind him if he wants to keep arguing with the boy.

And, oh, how John wants to keep arguing with him. John frowns deeply at Sherlock’s back and follows him out of the room and down the hallway into the kitchen. Their half-drunk cups of tea from earlier are sitting on a small space that John had cleared off of the table when he first got in and he wishes like hell he could make himself another cup right about now. “I can’t just cancel my plans last minute, Sherlock.”

“Why not?” Sherlock prods as he stops by the table and throws himself into one of the rickety seats, looking up at John yet somehow making it seem as if he is staring down his nose at the man. John wonders if Sherlock knows just how annoying he is.

“Because that’s not something that adults do!” John shouts out, at his wits end. He is tired of Sherlock taking liberties in their relationship and he is tired of Sherlock always getting his way. Sherlock needs to know that John will not cater to his every whim and now seems like as good a time as any to show him. “If we make commitments to other people, we generally try to keep them because it’s the polite, socially acceptable thing to do,” John explains to him, frustrated with Sherlock’s little temper tantrum. “I can’t just throw a wobbly like you’re doing and say that I’m not going. I’m a grown up.”

John knows it is the wrong thing to say. Knows it as soon as the words are out of his mouth. He clamps his lips shut but the damage has already been done, the words are out and hovering in the suddenly still air between them like a deadly cloud.

For a long while Sherlock only stares at him blankly. His eyes have gone an odd pale-green colour in the bright light that filters in through the kitchen window and shines down on him from behind, tinting his hair more auburn than usual. It makes his skin look much paler than it really is.
“Is that what I’m doing, then?” Sherlock asks suddenly, voice dangerously soft. “Throwing a wobbly, like a child?”

“No,” John says quickly. “I didn’t mean—”

Sherlock stands from the table abruptly, making all of the science equipment and their tea cups rattle violently. He grabs up his tepid tea and dumps it suddenly onto the front of John’s shirt, being sure to splash his crotch as well.

“Sherlock, what the fuck?!” John yells, trying to move away from the boy even though it won’t help at this point. He looks down at his wet, stained shirt and trousers in astonishment. “What the hell’s gotten into you?” he asks, voice loud and furious.

But Sherlock doesn’t bother answering him. Instead he turns to the kitchen worktop behind him, grabbing up whatever is within reach and whipping back around to lob anything that he has gotten his hands on at John while simultaneously yelling at the man.

“Is that how you think this is going to work?” Sherlock shouts as an opened package of biscuits sails across the table and hits John straight in the chest, contents scattering everywhere. “You come in and fuck me, take what you want and then talk down to me?” Sherlock throws something that might be a melted spatula at John, and it catches John in the arm that he has brought up to protect himself with. “And then you dictate when I can and can’t see you, meeting me only when it’s convenient for you, and sod what I want?” The next casualty is a large stack of post that has been rubber-banded together and actually quite hurts as it thuds into John’s stomach. John wonders just how many more random things Sherlock will find on the worktops before he starts throwing his science equipment around. But then his query is answered: quite a bit, it seems. An old, tin tea canister goes sailing past John’s head as he ducks around it and other miscellaneous items follow suit. Some find their mark while others don’t, but Sherlock looks like he couldn’t care less. The boy is so angry that he doesn’t even seem to be aiming at John in particular while he is throwing things.

“Jesus, Sherlock, no, of course not! How could you think that?” John shouts out as he brings his hands up to fend off random kitchen items. He doesn’t understand what the fuck is happening. How have they gone from having a wonderful wanking session on the boy’s bed to Sherlock lobbing household missiles at him? Something pointy and rock hard catches him on the forehead—a stale scone that hurts like hell. “Stop, would you?”

“Well, I am just a ‘child’!” Sherlock continues shouting, and now there are medical and scientific journals coming at John, deadly in nothing else but the sheer force of the angry teen that is launching them across the room. “Why wouldn’t I think something so immature and stupid?”

One journal is thrown in such a way that by simple luck it hits John’s bad shoulder spine-corner first. “Ow, Sherlock, stop!” John shouts out, completely and utterly done with this rot. He thinks about the ridiculousness of the situation. The two of them are standing in Sherlock’s kitchen, John with a huge tea stain on his front running down to his crotch and Sherlock throwing things while wearing nothing but a pair of boxers and a faded graphic tee. It’s completely absurd. “That’s enough!” he demands, and he is sure that the unamused look on his face matches the harsh tone of his voice.

Sherlock doesn’t seem to care, though. “Fuck you, John!” he continues shouting, although he is no longer launching domestic projectiles at the man. Whether this is because he has listened to John or simply because he has run out of ammo, John doesn’t know, but he doesn’t rightly care. “Go to your little dinner date with your wife and your grown up friends!” he spits out, face red with anger. “And when Mary pisses you off tonight, don’t come crawling to me, wanting me to make it better...
with a shag, since that’s all I’m good to you for!”

John is about to snap back in response but Sherlock makes a sudden move towards the table that is off to one side between them. He picks up a large red bowl and comes at John, and the man’s military training kicks in a moment too late. There is only one direction John can move in and Sherlock seems to anticipate it, throwing the huge mixing bowl of finely ground yeast that he was using for a fermentation experiment towards John and catching him directly on the wet patch on his clothing. The powder cakes into John’s damp clothes immediately and the man stills, astonished and at a loss as he stares down at the mess that Sherlock has made of him. While John isn’t looking at him, Sherlock seems to pull an extra handful of powder out of nowhere because the next thing John knows his face and hair are covered in it as well, and he can’t even breathe without the fine granules creeping into his nose and threatening to suffocate him.

John looks up in stunned anger. “Sherlock,” he says lowly, with a certain calm that he definitely doesn’t feel. “What in the name of fuck—” but he doesn’t get the chance to finish his sentence because Sherlock cuts him off suddenly, chin raised and eyes cold.

“Get out.”

John can’t understand what has happened; here he is, standing in Sherlock’s kitchen having a ridiculous row and covered in yeast from head to toe. It makes absolutely no sense and John isn’t leaving until he at least gets cleaned up, that much is certain.

“Sherlock, I need to—”

“Get out, John!” Sherlock repeats, screaming it this time.

“Let me at least wash—”

“Out, now!”

John doesn’t think he has ever seen Sherlock so angry. The sheer force of his fury and the deadly glint in his wicked eyes are enough to make John shut his mouth against the words that he wants to say. Without a word, he simply turns on his heel and marches out of Sherlock’s house with what little dignity he has left underneath a fine layer of yeast and a goose egg caused by a stale scone.

* By the time he pulls into the driveway of his home, John’s anger has only grown. He punches the steering wheel a few times, a cloud of fine yeast rising off of his body at the sudden movements, before getting out of his car and slamming the door shut with more force than necessary, knocking even more powder off of his clothing. When he enters his house, Mary is in the sitting room off to one side of the entryway and she looks up as he comes in.

“My God, John, what happened to you?” she asks, mouth falling open and blue eyes going wide.

John looks away from her in embarrassment, because even if she doesn’t know the truth of the situation, John does, and it’s humiliating. At least he doesn’t have to worry about her seeing the bright red blush he is sporting; the yeast makes everything a drab tan colour. “I stayed late to help the chemistry teacher try out an experiment that he wants his class to do later this week,” he lies, and tries not to think about how easy it has become for him to do so now. “It, ah, didn’t go well.”

Mary, surprisingly enough, believes him. “Well, go shower and change. We have to be at Mike and Rebecca’s in an hour,” she reminds him, and if he didn’t know any better he would say that she was trying not to laugh at him.
He curses Sherlock Holmes once more and waddles up the stairs carefully, trying not to jar anymore yeast loose now that he is inside his home.

It doesn’t work.

*

He doesn’t have any time to clean out his car, so he settles for throwing a couple of blankets over his seats so that their clothes don’t get dirty from the excess powder that had fallen off of him while he had driven back from Sherlock’s. Mary stays thankfully silent about the whole thing, not even asking questions, and they make the drive over to Mike’s in a thick silence that John doesn’t even notice because the entire time he is thinking of Sherlock.

Sodding Sherlock and his sodding tantrum. The anger bubbles up in John’s stomach the more he dwells on it. What right does Sherlock have to demand that he stay, anyway? Sherlock is always so fucking imperious, so self-righteous. He never once stops to think about how hard this is on John, how difficult it is to keep their affair a secret from his wife and the entire school.

But no, Sherlock wants what he wants and to hell with everyone else’s needs.

The boy is selfish. Fucking selfish.

They get to Mike’s and John pulls into the drive, shutting off the car and making his way to the front door. Mary knocks and someone opens it for them, and there is the pleasant chatter of small talk as they are let into Mike’s house.

John doesn’t pay attention to any of it.

How can Sherlock possibly think any of those things he said about John are true? John has never once talked down to Sherlock, has never once forcefully taken anything from Sherlock that he didn’t willingly want to give John. John makes sure of that. Every single fucking time they are together, he makes sure of that. That is the reason they haven’t had sex yet; that is the reason John has been taking things so slow he feels like his brain wants to melt every time he gets Sherlock into bed and he knows that he can’t go any further with him.

He has always treated Sherlock with the utmost respect and care, which is more than John can say about the way the child treats him. Sherlock is constantly pushing John’s boundaries, always wanting more, always taking whatever he can get from the man. It’s fucking ridiculous that John puts up with it.

Before he knows it, John feels Mary grabbing his arm and pulling him out of Mike’s house. The four of them pile into Mike’s car (he thinks he hears Mary say something about him being distracted so it would probably be best if someone else drives) and he sits and fumes in the back seat as the other three chatter on happily about silly, inane things that he could care less about.

When they get to the restaurant, John sits at the table next to his wife and orders dinner and a drink from the bar mechanically, not really paying any attention. He tries to keep the scowl off of his face as he seethes in silent anger but he doesn’t think he does a very good job of it. On the bright side, Mary and Mike seem to notice that he wants to be left alone and so no one talks to him much, leaving him to stew in his own rage.

And, oh, how John stews.

The kid is mental, John finally decides as dessert comes out with another scotch on the rocks, his third or fourth of the night. A complete and utter loon. Totally unhinged. That is the only
explanation for it. John is in a secret relationship with an immature child. How can he possibly not have expected this to happen sooner or later? Sherlock is sixteen years old, for Christ’s sake! Of course things were going to go pear shaped; it was only a matter of time before it happened. How many sixteen year olds are emotionally and mentally stable? Exactly none, that’s how many. And now John is permanently attached to one. This whole thing has become a shambles, he realises suddenly. He has no idea what the fuck he is going to do. No idea at all—

“—attention, John?” Mary asks and John just barely catches the sound of his name being said.

“Sorry, what?” he asks, pulling himself out of his thoughts for the first time that night.

“I said, ‘are you even paying attention, John?’ ” Mary repeats, and now she is frowning slightly. Her short, bright blonde hair looks a shade darker in the low lighting of the restaurant and John glances around the table to see that Mike and Rebecca are engaged in a conversation on their own, not paying attention to John and Mary.

“Oh, er,” he blushes and looks down at his half-empty glass of scotch, embarrassed. “Thinking about something that happened at school today. Sorry,” he mumbles out as a vague excuse, hoping his wife will buy it.

Mary gives him a hard, calculating look, picking up her fork and taking a bite of her tiramisu. “You’ve been in a foul mood all night. Is everything okay?” she asks, and she actually sounds concerned for him.

“Yeah, ‘course. Why wouldn’t it be?” he responds and tries to smile at her. He thinks it may look more like a grimace.

Mary just sighs and shrugs; a small move of her slim shoulders. “I dunno, it just seems like you’ve been a lot happier recently but tonight you’re acting like your old self again,” she explains.

He thinks that he should probably be somewhat offended because it sounds like there’s an insult hidden in her words, but he can’t be arsed to care about anything other than his ridiculous row with Sherlock right now.

“No, just…crap day at work, that’s all,” he reassures her, shaking his head.

She looks as if she doesn’t believe him in the slightest but thankfully lets it go and turns back to the conversation that Mike and Rebecca are having.

John goes back to silently fuming.

*  

Once dinner is over, they step outside and Mike and Rebecca move towards the valet together, about to get the car, but Mary puts a hand on Mike’s arm and stops him. The brown haired man looks back at her quizzically as his wife continues on to the valet podium.

“I didn’t want to say anything in front of Becca because I didn’t know if she knew, and I didn’t want to start a row between you two,” Mary says, keeping her voice low. “But I can’t believe you started smoking again, Mike. You were doing so well; I thought you definitely had it this time.”

Mike looks at her, a confused frown on his face, and John’s stomach suddenly drops to his feet. He moves quickly behind Mary so that she can’t see him and prays that Mike will look over her shoulder at him.
“I haven’t—” Mike starts but finally John manages to catch his attention. John shakes his head vigorously at his friend, hoping, wishing, praying that he’ll take the hint and cover John’s arse on this one.

“Er, yeah, I haven’t, ah, let Rebecca know,” Mike covers his tracks badly, keeping his brown eyes trained on John as he speaks to Mary to see if he is saying the right thing. John supposes it is better than nothing. “She’d be so disappointed, see? I’d, uh, really appreciate it if you didn’t say anything to her.”

Mary gives him her patented frown, the one John is so used to having directed at him, but right then Rebecca rejoins them and Mike quickly and awkwardly moves the conversation on to other things.

*  

When they reach Mike’s house, John wants nothing more than to get into his car and go home so that he can sleep off this strange, surreal day. Mike stops him as he exits his friend’s car, however, pulling him in close and being sure to keep his voice low.

“What the fuck, mate?” Mike asks, and though he is practically whispering, John can still tell that he is angry. “You told her I was smoking again? Why?”

John gives a quick look over his shoulder and sees that Rebecca is saying goodbye to Mary by John’s car, neither paying attention to their husbands. “She, er, smelt it on me one time when I came home from…” he stumbles over his words and then trails off awkwardly. He realises suddenly that he hasn’t told Mike, his best, oldest friend—the only person who might even begin to understand what John is going through—that he has been cheating on his wife. “I, uh…I’ve been telling her that we’ve been going out to the pub a few times a week,” John explains in a rush. When he sees that Mike is gearing up to ask more questions, he continues before the man can inquire about something that John would rather not get into right now. “I’ve just been needing some time away from her, you know? But it’s…it’s gotten a bit out of hand. I….”

He trails off because he doesn’t want to tell Mike about his affair here, in the middle of Mike’s driveway as his wife waits for him just a few steps away, so instead he says, “I’ll tell you everything later, explain it all. I promise. I just didn’t know what else to say to her when she asked about the smell the other day, so I told her you were smoking again when we went out to pubs.”

Mike sighs and runs a hand through his messy brown hair. “Fuck, John. You had to pull me in on your lies?” He pauses and gives John an angry glare. “I have to tell you, I don’t much appreciate that.”

John winces, feeling chastised like a child. He glances back at Mary quickly and sees that she is already in the car, waiting for him. She is staring at the two men as they talk. “I know. Christ, I’m sorry. I didn’t mean to drag you into this mess this way but I panicked,” John whispers in a rush. “Look, it—it won’t happen again. I promise.” He throws one more glance in Mary’s direction. “I can’t talk about this now. We’ll meet up later, yeah? And I can make it up to you with a few pints and tell you everything.”

At that, Mike grins at him, not able to stay mad at John for too long, especially when beer is involved.

“You better,” Mike tells him happily, clapping John on the back and then saying goodbye.

The drive back to their house is just as silent as the drive to Mike’s had been. Mary throws him
concerned glances but doesn’t try to engage him in a conversation. John is thankful. The last thing he wants to do is have a row with Mary, too.

_Fucking hell, I’m snookered_, he thinks as he suddenly comes to the realisation that he now has two partners who he can’t seem to make happy. He winces at his own stupidity. Why did he ever think that starting a relationship with Sherlock was a good idea? How did he end up putting himself in a corner like this?

He isn’t going to apologise, he decides with finality. He hasn’t done anything wrong. He’s not the one who threw a spanner in the works. Sherlock is the one who should apologise—for acting like a child, for hurting John, for starting the argument in the first place. Not him.

He isn’t going to apologise.

*

“I’m sorry,” he apologises the very next day as Sherlock is opening the door for him.

Sherlock simply stands in the entryway and raises an imperious eyebrow at John’s words but remains still and silent, not letting John into his house.

“I hurt your feelings and I didn’t mean to. It’s just that…” John licks his lips nervously and rubs at the back of his neck with his hand, searching for the right words. “You’re a right prat, you know that?” is the best he can come up with. “A real dickhead.”

Sherlock seems unfazed. “This is you apologising?”

John laughs, because at least Sherlock hasn’t slammed the door in his face or started throwing anything at him yet, so he figures they are probably okay. “Yeah, it is,” John says with a cheeky grin. “What? Not good?”

Sherlock smiles at the old line. “A bit not good, yeah,” he mocks, but John can see that his shoulders have relaxed and he doesn’t look closed off anymore.

John decides to push his luck. “What would make it a better apology?” he asks, stepping closer to Sherlock.

Sherlock’s smile widens and he finally moves out of the way. He reaches out a hand to grab John’s jumper and pulls him into the house roughly. The door shuts behind them and Sherlock pushes John up against it, pressing close to him. “I can think of a few things,” Sherlock says, a wicked gleam in his eye and a sharp smile on his perfect lips.

*

They don’t even make it out of the entryway. If this is how they are going to make up after fights, John thinks that he might not mind having rows with Sherlock.

They are sitting on the floor, John’s back pressed up against the door and Sherlock sitting between his spread legs, back to John’s chest. Sherlock is naked once again—John can’t ever seem to let him keep any clothes on when they are fooling around. John’s trousers and pants are attached to only one of his legs, pushed down to his knee, with his shirt and jumper rucked up under his armpits in an attempt to keep them clean. He doesn’t mind having them pushed so far up his torso because Sherlock is in front of him, facing forward, his head resting against John’s shoulder. There’s no chance of Sherlock seeing any of John’s scars this way. John’s arms are wrapped around Sherlock’s chest, fingers making trails up and down the white skin, dragging his come-
coated hands over slick flesh. He had tossed the boy off while Sherlock sat in front of him, head thrown back on John’s shoulder and back pressed hard against John’s chest. John had rubbed his cock against Sherlock’s lower back and arse until he came, spattering the boy’s sacrum and his own stomach with his release. Sherlock is boneless against him now, leaning all of his insubstantial weight against John’s chest. The panels of the lower door are pressing uncomfortably into John’s back, but he doesn’t care. He is too busy admiring the love bite he had made low on Sherlock’s neck as the brunet had tilted his head back to rest on John’s shoulder. With his head still in that position now, John has a clear view of the vivid red mark.

“I should be mad at you, you know,” John whispers against the bite, kissing it softly. He loves to see his marks all over Sherlock’s body. “Why aren’t I mad at you?”

Sherlock just hums noncommittally, a soppy, sated smile on his face, and doesn’t answer.

“How do you do that?” John asks, his arms tightening around Sherlock’s thin body, indicating that he wants an actual answer.

“Do what?” Sherlock asks in return, tangling their fingers together over his stomach.

“Muddle everything up,” John explains without missing a beat. “Make me forget myself completely. You drive me round the fucking bend, you know that?” John shakes his head and frowns down at him. “I can’t ever seem to suss you out. I try. God, how I try. But I just can’t sort it. It’s amazing. No matter how badly you try to cock things up, I come right back to you. Every time. I just can’t stay away from you.”

Against him Sherlock stiffens indignantly, trying to pull away from John, and squawks, “I don’t try to cock things up!”

John laughs and holds onto him tighter, not letting him get away. “Oh, yes you do. All the time. But this one really takes the biscuit, Sherlock, I have to tell you.”

Sherlock gives up his struggle against John’s arms and relaxes back into the man once again. “It’s your own fault, you know,” he tells John, as if it is all so obvious.

“How do you figure that?” John asks with a smile, a part of him already knowing the answer.

Sherlock shrugs unconcernedly. “If you would just do everything that I say, then we wouldn’t have these problems.”

John laughs loudly and the movement jostles Sherlock against his chest. “Is that so?” he asks.

“Yeah, it is,” Sherlock assures him with a smile of his own.

John reaches a hand up to turn Sherlock’s face towards his own by the boy’s chin. “Come here, you lanky twonk,” he mumbles as he brings Sherlock in for a kiss. The angle is slightly awkward but neither one of them seems to care. It feels interesting and John loves the way that Sherlock is pressed up so close to him.

“God, I’m totally gone on you,” John tells him as he breaks the kiss, placing a small peck on Sherlock’s nose for good measure. “I don’t know why, but I am.”

Sherlock makes a face as John’s kiss lands on the tip of his nose, but he blushes and doesn’t say anything about it. After a second, though, when the silence has descended upon them, John can feel Sherlock start to squirm nervously in his grasp. It is only a moment before Sherlock begins to look distinctly uncomfortable and he says, “So, you aren’t going to…”
He trails off without finishing his sentence and John waits for him to continue, but it seems as though Sherlock has run out of the courage to say whatever it was that he had wanted to say.

“To what?” John prods him, curious now.

He is met with an uneasy silence.

“What, sweetheart?” John asks, giving him a reassuring squeeze around the middle. “It’s all right, you can tell me.”

There is another short pause of silence before Sherlock finally asks, in a quiet voice that John almost misses, “You aren’t leaving me?”

John stares at the back of Sherlock’s curly head in utter surprise and shock. He can’t believe that Sherlock has to even ask him that. “Sherlock,” he says, at a loss. “No, darling. Of course not. Of course not,” he stresses. “Just because we argue or get mad or frustrated with each other doesn’t mean that this is over.”

John forgets, sometimes, that Sherlock is just a child; broken and abandoned and alone. John knows he probably didn’t set the best example, trying to end things before they had even begun so early on in their relationship, but he wants Sherlock to understand that this is important to John now, this isn’t just meaningless, unattached sex. John cares about Sherlock, has always cared about him, and his feelings for Sherlock have only grown ever since they started this thing.

“We’ll fight, Sherlock,” John states, rather matter-of-factly, hugging his lover tightly. “We’ll yell at one another, and say things to one another, and sometimes feel like we hate each other. That’s normal. And making up after all that is normal, too. If everyone just walked away from everything they cared about when things got difficult then there wouldn’t be anything worth living for, in my opinion.”

John thinks about how Sherlock must feel—knowing, understanding, that the people he is meant to trust most in this world did exactly that—walked away from him. No wonder Sherlock had to ask what he did: the boy has never had anyone stay.

Well, John will change that. John isn’t going anywhere.

“I’m not going to leave just because we had a stupid row, Sherlock,” he promises, dropping kisses along Sherlock’s neck and making the body in his arms shiver. He smiles against Sherlock’s sweaty, slick skin. “It’s going to take more than that to scare me off, I’m afraid.”

But he can feel Sherlock closing off from him; shutting down even while John has his arms wrapped so tightly around him. “You’ll leave eventually, though,” Sherlock whispers lowly, staring ahead of them and not letting John see his face. The sound of his voice is detached and emotionless. “Everyone does.”

John’s heart stutters in his chest at Sherlock’s words. Even just the idea of doing what Sherlock thinks he will do is painful and makes him ill. “Hey. Hey, look at me,” he tells Sherlock, voice rough and low, but Sherlock isn’t listening to him. “Look at me,” John orders him, tone going harsh and commanding. That seems to get Sherlock’s attention, and he turns as best he can in John’s arms, because John isn’t letting him go, not even a little bit.

“You don’t have to be scared of that anymore,” John swears to him, looking Sherlock straight in the eye. “I won’t leave you like that.” He leans forward and kisses Sherlock once, soft and sweet, on the lips. “I promise.”
You Drove Me to the Fire...

Chapter Notes

Thanks to Indelible_Ink for the beta and the Brit-pick. Chapter title is taken from the Matchbox 20 song "Disease". I took most of John and Mycroft’s conversation almost line for line from ASiP. I squealed like a fangirl when I noticed how well their conversation fit my story (I thought it was ironic...) This chapter is a 2-parter and goes hand-in-hand with the next chapter, so there's a bit of a cliffhanger-ish ending. Sorry.

My crap week ended and I am happy, so I wanted to post again to celebrate :-)

He leaves Sherlock’s house that evening at a decent hour, content and at peace with the world once again. Everything seems to just be better when he and Sherlock are happy, when they aren’t furious or annoyed with one another. As he gets into his car to head back home he gets a text from Mary asking him if he can stop off at the shop and get some milk for tomorrow because she finished the last of it with her tea that evening.

He lets her know he will and drives into town, figuring he can pick up some more nicotine patches for Sherlock while he is out. When he gets to the shop he parks his car and turns it off, opening the door and getting out. As he is standing, his mobile goes off and he fumbles for it, looking down at the screen and frowning at what he sees. An unlisted, blocked number is ringing through. He has no idea who it could possibly be and so he lets it ring out, thinking that whoever it is might leave a voice message. He closes his door and begins to walk away, towards the shop, but his mobile starts ringing a second time. The same ‘Blocked Number’ ID shows up on his screen again.

He answers it this time, even though the feeling of dread that washes over him as he clicks the talk button should have warned him off of it entirely.

“Dr. Watson?” a sharp, public school voice asks over the line.

John frowns, licking his lips nervously. “Yes,” he says.

“Dr. John Watson?” the voice prods.

“Ye—who is this?” he asks, frowning at an invisible stranger.

“There is a car that will pull up to you in a moment with a woman inside,” the voice on the other end of the line states, and as it speaks its words come true. A sleek-looking black sedan pulls up in the car park and stops right beside John, who is staring at it in amazement, stunned silent. The door opens from the inside and reveals a strikingly beautiful brunette woman in a smart skirt suit. She smiles charmingly at John for a moment before turning her attention back to the smartphone in her hands as the voice in his ear says, “Get into the car, Dr. Watson. I would make some sort of threat, but I’m sure your situation is quite clear to you.”

The line goes dead before John can say anything in response.

He stares into the open door of the car while the woman sits in her seat, typing away at the small,
thin mobile in her hands. She doesn’t look at John; she simply says “Come along,” as if the whole situation isn’t strange at all.

John debates his predicament for a moment. He knows he shouldn’t even be considering getting into this vehicle—he’s seen enough crime dramas to know how this could possibly end—but the last words that the man’s voice spoke to him over the phone ring back in his ears.

He knows what this is about. He has been expecting this for quite some time, in fact.

So he figures he may as well get it over with.

John takes a step towards the open car door and the woman silently budges over into the other seat, making space for him. She continues typing away at her phone, not even bothering to look up at him as he closes the door and the car silently begins to drive off, John sitting uncomfortably inside of it.

After a long moment of awkward silence, John can’t take it anymore. “Hello,” he says to the woman who is still typing away on her mobile.

She gives him a quick look and a polite smile. “Hi,” she says simply, going back to her phone.

“I’m John,” he continues uneasily, unsure of what to say in a situation like this.

“Yes,” she says to him offhandedly, raising an eyebrow in mocking amusement and giving him a look out of the corner of her eye that is slightly judgmental. “I know.”

Right, then. That pretty much cements his conclusions about what is happening. If she knows who he is, though, he thinks it’s only fair that he know who she is.

“What’s your name, then?” he asks, turning away from her to look out the window. He knows he should keep track of where they are going but he has lived in this city for less than a year and he hasn’t gotten to know all of the streets as well as he should. They are in a part of town that he doesn’t recognise at all.

“Uh, Anthea,” the woman answers him distractedly, and John almost snorts in amusement.

“Is that your real name?”

For the first time the woman looks at him—really looks at him—and her face is a strange mixture of amused, impressed, and guilty. “No,” she answers him with a smile.

He nods his head silently as if he had been expecting that and continues glancing out the windows, trying to find something that is even vaguely familiar-looking but he can’t. They have driven to a rather industrial part of the city where there is little else other than huge factories and warehouses. “Any point in asking where I’m going?” he questions, not getting his hopes up for an answer.

“Anthea” continues pecking away at her mobile, not bothered at all by John’s nervousness. “None at all, John,” she says without looking at him. And that is the last she speaks for the rest of the trip.

Eventually the car brings them to an abandoned warehouse, crumbling at the corners. It looks like the kind of place people go to get murdered. The vehicle pulls up into a large covered part of the building that may have been a multi-storey car park at one point, but is most likely just a piece of the building that has a hole blown wide enough in one wall that a car can fit easily through it. As the vehicle creeps slowly forward, John can see a person standing in the center of the room as he
looks through the windscreen. It is the figure of a striking, solitary, well-dressed gentleman who is leaning rather nonchalantly on a tall umbrella, one foot crossed over the other as he stands in the headlamps of the approaching car. When the vehicle stops, John looks over at the woman who has been silently sitting next to him the entire ride, waiting for some sort of direction. Anthea only briefly spares a quick glance up from her phone—presumably to be sure that they are at the right destination—before turning back to her mobile and saying simply, “He’s waiting for you.”

With that John bites his lips and hides a frown, opening the car door and getting out of the vehicle, resigned but determined. He can guess what this is; he doesn’t have to be Sherlock Holmes, teenage genius, to understand what is going on.

The concrete beneath his feet is damp, and the building smells moldy. A few drops of rain fall on his black donkey jacket and he spares a quick look up above him to see that half of the building’s ceiling is missing. He hopes the structure can keep from caving in until he has at least finished meeting with the man who has brought him out here. With the reminder, he quickly shuts the car door and walks towards the lone figure standing stoically in the beams of the car’s headlights. John squares himself up as tall as he can stand and makes his way towards the stranger, schooling his features into something cold and hard that he hasn’t used since he directed troops into war zones.

After what feels like a small eternity, he reaches the silent man and stands in front of him. They stare at one another for a long moment, neither one speaking. John knows the man is sizing him up and he stands tall and proud, back ramrod straight and shoulders squared. He digs down deep and finds Captain Watson of the Fifth Northumberland Fusiliers and settles his authority around him like a heavy, familiar coat.

“You don’t seem very frightening,” John answers back, the response quick and biting. He doesn’t appreciate this man stealing him away in the middle of the evening, employing scare tactics to make John squirm. The ex-soldier has never been one for theatrics.

The man chuckles loudly at John’s answer, as if amused by John in the same way he would be amused by a dancing pet monkey. “Yes, the bravery of the soldier,” he says, sharp smile never leaving his face. “Bravery is by far the kindest word for stupidity, don’t you think? Although a second close would have to be love.” He pauses and gives John a calculating stare. “What is your connection to Sherlock Holmes?” he asks suddenly, and there it is: the reason John knows that he’s here in this isolated, derelict building, talking to this shadowy, dangerous man.

“I don’t have one,” John lies easily—he’s getting fairly used to it by now. “I barely know him. I’m just his teacher.” He keeps his stance solid and his face emotionless. He was trained in the Army to withstand enemy interrogations. He can hold his own against this man. He isn’t afraid of him.

The tall stranger purses his lips, and it is the only sign he gives that he is displeased, bored now with this game that they are playing. “So do you meet with all of your students in secluded coffee
houses during the middle of the night?” he asks contemptuously. “Or give them the number to your mobile? Or go over to their homes after the school day and stay for hours?”

John knows it would be pointless to deny these things, so he goes a different route. “We’re just friends,” he states plainly; his rehearsed, official party line. He has been wondering when he was going to first have to use it.

“‘Friends’, you say,” the man repeats sardonically, his voice and smile both unpleasantly greasy. “I find that hard to believe.”

“Why?” John asks, tone indifferent. He wants to frown at this man for his callous attitude towards Sherlock, but he doesn’t dare. It would rather show his hand, he knows.

“You’ve met him,” the man says by way of answer. “He doesn’t have…friends.” He says the word as if it leaves a foul taste in his mouth. “I’m the closest thing to a friend that Sherlock Holmes is capable of having.”

John’s hand tightens into a fist at his side but other than that he doesn’t move. He hates this man for assuming that Sherlock is unable to have normal relationships. He has a perfectly normal relationship with John, one that the ex-soldier is proud of, one that he will defend from this man who is trying to sully it.

They stand there, staring at each other in a tense, awkward silence, neither one wanting to make the next move, yet knowing someone has to break first. But before one of them can continue, a sharp ping sound splits the still, heavy air between them—John’s phone, letting him know he has a text message. There is only one person who would text John right now, and both he and the man standing across from him know who that is. Without taking his eyes from Sherlock’s brother, John digs into the pocket of his trousers and retrieves his mobile. He lets his gaze linger on Mycroft Holmes for a moment longer before looking down at his phone, the elder Holmes watching him the whole time.

Received: I seem to have misplaced my skull. Did you happen to see it when you were here? SH

John almost smiles down at the screen but remembers himself just in time and catches it. Just because Mycroft assumes that Sherlock is the one who is texting John doesn’t mean that John has to admit to it and hand the man the gasoline if he is going to try to burn John.

“I hope I’m not distracting you,” Mycroft says politely when he is tired of waiting for John, but his tone suggests he hopes that is exactly what he is doing.

“No,” John answers, turning off the screen of his phone without responding to the message and making a show of putting it back into his pocket. “Not distracting me at all.”

“Do you plan to continue your association with Sherlock Holmes?” Mycroft asks him bluntly, and John can tell that he is a man who is used to getting results—it is obvious he is getting tired of playing games with John even if he tries to look unaffected by it all. Mycroft glances down at the hand that he is using to clutch the handle of his umbrella, spreading his fingers out as if he is so bored, so seemingly unconcerned with the conversation that he finds his cuticles more interesting than John’s answer. But John knows differently. Knows that if Mycroft truly didn’t care—the way Sherlock seems to think he doesn’t—then John wouldn’t be here at all.

Knows that if he answers incorrectly, his life could very well be over.

“I could be wrong,” John says, and he can feel his hackles rise against the invisible threat of
Mycroft Holmes, “but I think that’s none of your business.” He knows Sherlock’s brother cares for the brunet teen—of course Mycroft does. Why else would he make sure the bills are paid and that Sherlock is clothed and off of drugs? But still, there is something about the condescension of this man, the arrogance. John can see why Sherlock hates his brother; Mycroft wants to take care of Sherlock but only because he wants a way to control the boy. That much is evident, even to John.

What little sliver of politeness Mycroft has been maintaining during his conversation with John drains away in an instant at John’s answer, leaving a severe-looking man who holds himself as if he has all of the power of a great country at the tips of his fingers. John can easily believe that Mycroft is every bit as influential as Sherlock says he is, every bit as remorseless.

“It could be,” Mycroft says coldly, and John can see by the look in the dark eyes that Mycroft most certainly is done playing games now.

But so is John.

“It really couldn’t,” the smaller man says with a shake of his head and a mocking smile, raising his chin and tensing his body for a fight. John pitches his tone to meet Mycroft’s, dangerous and deadly. He levels Sherlock’s brother with a hard, unblinking stare which Mycroft returns effortlessly, his contempt for John seeping through unconstrained now.

“Why do you even care?” John asks. For the first time since he has been brought to this place he is actually curious about what the man before him will say.

If Mycroft seems taken aback by John’s sudden question, he doesn’t show it. But the Holmes brothers are very good at hiding their emotions, John has come to learn, and Mycroft’s words belie his aloof, blasé appearance. “I worry about him,” Mycroft says carefully, voice tight and clipped as if he is walking over land mines. “Constantly.” His eyes never leave John’s, as if challenging the ex-soldier to claim that his words are untrue.

John purses his lips and frowns. He tries to keep his own disdain for Mycroft in check. It doesn’t work. “That’s nice of you,” John tells him scathingly, unable to keep his mouth shut.

“But I would prefer for various reasons that my concern go unmentioned,” Mycroft continues on with an air of amicability that had not been there a moment before, ignoring John’s mocking comment. “We have what you might call a…difficult relationship.” He looks away from John, down at the umbrella that he is twirling distractedly over the ground, indifferent and nonchalant once again.

It makes John’s gut churn.

“Yes, he’s told me all about you,” John says, and it is the first time that he has actually admitted to having any sort of definite contact with Sherlock. John knows that it doesn’t go unnoticed by Mycroft. “Brother of the year, you are.”

“Yes,” Mycroft says, greasy smile in place once again. John wonders how this man can hold the power Sherlock claims he does in their government when he makes John’s skin crawl. “I see that he’s told you how he believes I treat him.” Mycroft doesn’t deny anything that he thinks Sherlock might have said about him, doesn’t try to offer any sort of justification. He simply levels John with that look again; emotionless, calculating. John can see no remorse in him for any of the things Sherlock has said he has done. “He does love to be dramatic,” Mycroft says simply, carefully, and it sounds more like a warning than an explanation.

“Well thank God you’re above all of that,” John replies cheekily, letting his eyes roam around the
damp, dirty room they are in.

Mycroft just stares at John blankly, obviously unamused by the blond’s reply. John lets him look, offering nothing more than his own glare in return.

While they stand there scowling at each other, John’s phone chirps once again. As he takes it out one more time to look at it, he sees Mycroft sneer at him like he has won some unstated game between the two of them.

Received: Nevermind, I found it in the freezer. SH

“You’re very devoted, very quickly,” Mycroft tells him, eyes narrowing slightly as he takes in everything he can about John, smirk still in place. He says the words with an air of condemnation that makes John’s skin crawl and something tighten in his belly.

John shakes his head steadily and has to force himself to stay calm. The longer he stands here talking to Mycroft Holmes, the more he has the feeling that he will end up in jail by the end of the night, or worse. “No, I’m not,” he says evenly, “I’m just concerned for his safety, the same as you.”

Mycroft’s face falls into a mask of something bordering on disgust, as if he is offended that John could compare their worry for Sherlock to each other’s. He silently reaches into his jacket, hand going to the inner breast pocket of his bespoke suit. When he brings it back out he is holding a small notebook, well-made brown leather, worn around the edges. He flips it to a page near the end and John shifts on his feet uneasily, nervously, because he doesn’t know what this man is playing at anymore. “‘Trust issues’, it says here,” Mycroft reads off of the page, looking up at John with a wicked smirk that looks disturbingly like Sherlock’s. “Well, that makes sense, what with your unfaithful wife and your discharge from the Army after they realised you were nothing but damaged goods.”

John frowns and swallows, something that feels like dread and anxiety churning deep in his gut. “What’s that?” he asks, although he already knows. It’s the notes of John’s appointments with his old therapist, the one he had in London. That’s the only thing that it can be. John has never talked to anyone besides Mike and Sherlock about his wife’s infidelity, and he has certainly never said a thing to anyone about the betrayal he felt when the Army—where he thought he would always have a place, among brothers—released him. Only the military appointed therapist that he was made to see after his discharge knew all of that.

“Could it be that you’ve decided to trust Sherlock Holmes of all people?” Mycroft asks, ignoring John’s question.

John licks his lips but he won’t be made to back down. Not by this man. “Who says I trust him?” he counters, jaw clenching tight as he grinds his teeth together.

Mycroft smiles down at John, and he looks as if he has finally been able to back the ex-soldier into a corner. “You don’t seem the kind to become infatuated so easily.”

John’s stomach churns once again, but this time it is in anger. He can’t believe the incredible audacity of this man, this worthless excuse of a brother. What gives him the right to talk to John like this, to judge John for his actions, when he has left Sherlock alone for the boy’s entire life? It’s preposterous and he swallows against the rage that seems to almost choke him. “Are we done?” he asks, ready to turn away before he loses what little self-control he has left and punches the poncy git right in his face.
Mycroft seems to know exactly what John is thinking, but he stands his ground, his smile growing. “You tell me,” he says, tone insolent.

John stares at the taller man, sizing him up for a moment and wondering how upset Sherlock would be if John broke his brother’s nose. Probably not very. But John quickly decides to be the bigger person, to take the high road, and he turns on his heel and begins to walk away, hands clenched into fists at his side. He only gets a few steps away before he hears Mycroft continue speaking behind him, raising his voice slightly so that John is sure to hear him. “I can see you already know that you should stay away from him, but I also know that’s not going to happen.”

John knows he shouldn’t stop. Knows he shouldn’t turn around. Knows he should just keep walking and not look back, not listen to another thing that Mycroft Holmes has to say about his relationship with Sherlock.

He knows this. But he finds himself stopping nonetheless, caught by the strange tone in Mycroft’s voice. The man sounds almost sorry for John.

“But you would do well to stay away from him, Dr. Watson,” Mycroft says when John turns back towards him. “Why?” John asks, licking his lips. “Because you’ll ruin me if I don’t?” He knows what this is; this is the predictable older sibling speech. The ‘I’m going to hurt you if you don’t leave my little brother alone’ cliché. The ‘You’re a grown adult who also happens to be his teacher, and he is a sixteen year old boy, and this is disgusting and not right, and I’ll have you thrown in prison without a second thought’ threat. John steels himself for all of the familiar lines.

But Mycroft surprises him.

“No,” Mycroft says, and his face is no longer holding that layer of contempt for John. Now he just looks at John with something akin to pity. “My brother has a way about him. You will lose yourself in him. They all do.”

“All’?” John repeats, stomach suddenly dropping to his feet. He hates himself for asking, but he can’t help it. “What do you mean?”

“Did you think you were the first? Is that what he told you?” Mycroft asks him, voice genuinely curious. There is a small, worried frown gracing his broad forehead, so different from Sherlock’s own. “Like I said, he has always been partial to lying, among a multitude of other sins. Lust being one of them.”

John tries to respond, wants to, but he can’t seem to make his mouth work. His stomach is roiling sickeningly and his mind has completely shut down. Shocked. He is shocked. He stands there, in the bright florescent headlights of the car that brought him to this place, and is speechless. He thinks he vaguely hears Mycroft say softly, “I’m sorry, Dr. Watson,” as he slinks away into the shadows at the edges of the room, leaving John alone with this new piece of information about Sherlock Holmes, the boy he thought he knew.

He feels himself being pushed and prodded into the back seat of the car, hears the door slam shut next to him, but he doesn’t pay attention to any of it. The silent woman slides into the seat next to him through the other door and the car begins to drive smoothly away from the warehouse. The vehicle passes bright streetlights that glow phosphorescent in the darkness of the night outside and John stares out of the window while he tries not to let his heart break apart, but he only manages not to cry instead.
...and Left Me There to Burn

Chapter Notes

Chapter warning: There is a small, quick implication of a failed attempt at a non-consensual sexual situation (or two situations, depending on how you look at it)

This took way longer to post than I wanted it to. Why does real life have to get in the way of wonderful, more important things, like fanfiction? Sorry it's short, but it's really just the response to the boy's current problem, and then we can move on to other things :-) Thanks to Indelible_Ink for the beta and Brit-pick. As always, I rewrote after because I don't know when to stop. Chapter title is other half of lyrics from Matchbox 20 song "Disease".

John feels sick. Disgusted with himself. He's been an idiot, the worst kind of fool. How could he possibly think that someone like Sherlock was a virgin? The boy is stunning, enigmatic, vibrant, brilliant, amazing. A million different wonderful, beautiful things. Of course other people have fallen for him.

How can he be so gullible? How can he be so stupid? First Mary and now Sherlock. Why did he ever think that he was worthy of being cared for by anyone, especially someone as incredible as Sherlock? He can't make Mary happy—not now, not years ago when she first broke up with him at university—what made him think he could ever possibly be good enough for Sherlock Holmes?

But he doesn't deserve to be lied to. He has given Sherlock everything. Everything. All of his pride, all of his decency, all of his reason and rationality, all of his sanity. Everything he has. He has treated Sherlock like a prince, has done everything that the boy has asked of him.

John doesn't deserve this. He deserves better. He thought he had found better with Sherlock. He really thought he had. Thought he had found someone who would never lie to him, never hurt him. Someone who would finally, actually, love him someday. Someone he could trust. But it has all been fake. Every look, every kiss, every touch. It has all been for the simple fact that Sherlock is bored and wants a distraction. That much is obvious to John just from looking at Sherlock's past.

The thing that John can't figure out, though, is: why him? Why did Sherlock want a relationship with a man who is his teacher? He could have gone back to drugs to keep himself occupied, he could have chosen anybody else in the world to fuck, but he picked John.

Is it just to put another notch in his bedpost, John wonders. Just for the thrill of saying that he got to sleep with his teacher, with someone over twice his age? Is it just to see John jump through hoops for Sherlock and destroy his whole life for the teen? Is Sherlock really that cruel? Cruel enough that he would take John’s heart in his hand and crush it to dust while he watches John throw away a marriage, a job, a chance at a decent life, all for Sherlock?

John just simply doesn’t understand. He cares about Sherlock. Deeply. He knows this, knows that Mycroft’s words wouldn’t hurt half as much as they do if John didn’t care about Sherlock. He cares about Sherlock in a way that scares him with its intensity. So how could Sherlock do this to him?
He thought he had hurt before, when he had been cheated on by his wife, when he had been shot, when he had been discharged from the Army, when he had given up his career as a surgeon, when he had hurt Sherlock’s feelings. But this…this *betrayal*…it is agony.

“Where do you want us to drop you?” Anthea asks him suddenly, breaking through his reverie. “Your car?”

“No,” he says before he can stop himself, before he can think twice about it. “Take me to the Holmes’ house.”

If the woman disapproves of his choice, she doesn’t say anything to him about it. John has to give it to Mycroft; at least the man knows how to pick decent staff who know when to mind their own business.

Anthea goes back to silently typing away on her smartphone and John goes back to looking out of the backseat window, wondering what on earth he is going to say to Sherlock when he sees the teen.

*

The Holmes house is dark when they pull up. The driveway is empty, at least, so John knows that Sherlock’s father hasn’t stumbled home tonight.

“Do you want us to wait?” Anthea asks as John opens the door and gets out of the car.

He shakes his head without looking at her, his eyes intent on the front door. His stomach is twisting into knots and there is a tightness squeezing at his throat. He shuts the door to the car and is surprised at how hard it slams closed. He takes a deep breath to try to calm himself down but it doesn’t help at all.

As he walks up to the front door he hears Mycroft’s car pull away, leaving him and Sherlock completely alone in the boy’s house as early night settles in around him. His knock sounds loud in the still darkness around him, and he wonders if Sherlock’s neighbours are able to hear it. He hopes not.

It takes Sherlock a minute to come to the front door; he hadn’t been expecting visitors, that much is certain, and he certainly hadn’t been expecting John to come back after he had left earlier that evening. Sherlock opens the door, frowning at John once he recognises the blond in the dim light shining down from the half moon.

“John?” Sherlock asks, as if he isn’t sure of what he is seeing. “What are you—?”

Before Sherlock can finish his question, John pushes past him, barging inside Sherlock’s home. He doesn’t want to have this conversation with the front door open, but he knows he won’t be able to keep his mouth shut any longer. He manages to keep his anger at bay for a few more seconds while Sherlock closes the door but as soon as it shuts John can’t contain it anymore.

“How many other men were there?” John asks, rounding on Sherlock there in the narrow hallway of the teen’s house. “How many other men have you fucked? Torn away from their lives?”

Sherlock does nothing but stare at him blankly for a long moment, curly hair unmanageably mussed from sleep. He must have drifted off as soon as John left. If Sherlock is surprised at John’s question he doesn’t show any sign of it at all, only wide eyes and an unblinking stare.

“None,” Sherlock says lowly, his voice almost a whisper. He doesn’t get offended that John has
just called him out on sleeping around, on lying, but John knows that doesn’t mean anything. Mary has had that same careful look on her face before, too.

“Your brother doesn’t seem to think that,” John states, standing his ground a few feet away from Sherlock, blocking any path Sherlock might use to get away from this conversation. John wants answers and he is going to get them if it kills him.

At the mention of Mycroft, realisation suddenly dawns on Sherlock’s pale features. The blank mask that hid Sherlock’s surprise lifts slightly, and John can see a fierce anger showing through now, a darkening of Sherlock’s eyes and a tightening of his full mouth.

“My brother has never paid any attention to me beyond what’s relevant to secure his next position in the government,” Sherlock hisses at John, and when he says the word “brother” he spits it out like it is poison. “If there are a few hits of cocaine, then I must be a full blown addict; if there is a misunderstanding with a married man then I must be a slag; if there is an assault on me by an older man then I must have brought it on myself.”

Sherlock’s voice is getting progressively louder and louder as he continues talking, a bright red flush coming to his cheeks as he grows angrier and angrier, glowering at John from under frizzy, puffy hair. “Everything that I do is blown out of proportion, and he finds it hard to believe that I could ever be the victim in any circumstance,” Sherlock practically shouts at John before he seems to remember himself. He takes a deep, steadying breath and looks at John, and a sadness steals into his blue-green eyes.

“But I promise, I’ve never lied to you. You are the first person who I’ve ever done anything that intimate with—you are my first,” he stresses, and John releases a breath he didn’t know he had been holding, relieved beyond words. “And you have been the only one to do the things that you’ve done to me, to see me the way that you do, to touch me the way that you touch me,” Sherlock continues. “The first man who Mycroft is more than likely referring to, he was older, married…” The words are said haltingly, as if Sherlock is searching for the right ones, and he looks slightly embarrassed that he is having to tell John all of this. “It was a misunderstanding involving drugs. He…wanted certain things in exchange for them.”

Sherlock looks down at the floor in the darkened hallway and frowns under his mop of frizzy hair, trying to hide his face, but it’s no use. He can’t get away from the words he is saying out loud in the silence between them. “Don’t misinterpret what I’m saying, John; there are certain things that I’ve done for drugs in the past that I’m not proud of, but there are also certain lines that I’ve never crossed. And when I found out that was how he wanted me to pay, I tried to leave but…we ended up being caught in a drugs bust.” Sherlock sighs and runs a hand through his unmanageable hair with a shrug, making the frizz worse. “He was an upstanding citizen with a doting family and lots of important friends and I was…alone, with no one to stand up for me, bordering on becoming a junkie. Young. Of course they labelled me as an addict who would do any sort of demeaning thing for my next hit, while he got a slap on the wrist in secret and a damn good cover story to keep his reputation pristine.”

He pauses for a moment as if he is done talking but John knows there is more so he stays quiet, staring at Sherlock and silently urging him on. Sherlock looks away from John, fiddles with the hem of his sleep shirt, crosses his thin arms over his chest protectively.

“And the second man,” he whispers, eyes looking everywhere but at John. “He very nearly raped me and when I went to report it to the police he gave them some bullshit story about how I came to him, high already, and tried to trade sex for some prescription pills he was in legal possession of. He told them that when he refused to take me up on my offer I became angry and attacked him. He
explained away all of my bruises and marks as him defending himself against me. The police took one look at my record, at all of the drug charges and the trumped up charges for lewd and lascivious behaviour and figured that I must have started trading sex acts to support my habit. They charged me and didn’t even try to listen to what I had to say. Mycroft wouldn’t listen to me, either. He just tried to cover it all up as quickly as possible.”

Jesus Christ.

John doesn’t know what to say, doesn’t have words enough to apologise to Sherlock. He feels disgusted with himself again, but in a completely different way than he had felt in Mycroft’s car coming over to Sherlock’s house. This is a disgust at his lack of trust in Sherlock, a revulsion at his own insecurities and the way he is capable of treating this breakable boy standing in front of him. He was right earlier—he doesn’t deserve Sherlock. But it is because he doesn’t deserve to have something so beautiful, so fragile, in his life because he doesn’t know how to care for it properly.

“Christ, Sherlock,” he breathes out, and his voice is thick with something that sounds like tears. “I’m sorry. I’m so sorry.” He reaches out and pulls the child into his arms, crushes Sherlock to him tightly. Sherlock comes willingly enough and falls into John’s broad chest, hiding his face in John’s jumper where it peeks through his jacket as the man buries his nose into the crown of Sherlock’s head. He inhales the scent of the youth, soft and warm from sleep, and hugs him tighter, wondering how on earth he could ever apologise enough for his stupid, foolish behaviour.

“It’s just…” John searches for words that don’t want to be found, but he digs down deep, looking for something that will explain how he feels. “I don’t know what comes over me when you’re around,” he mumbles into Sherlock’s hair. “I lose my mind, my good judgment, my reason. I know you would never lie to me. I’m sorry I accused you like that, like everyone else has.”

Against his chest he feels Sherlock shake his head. “You’re not like everyone else,” Sherlock says quietly. “That’s why I’m with you; that’s why I’ve given you this, given you myself. Because you treat me differently than anyone else ever has.” His long slim fingers clench tightly at the edges of John’s donkey jacket, around the zippers, pulling him closer. “Thank you.”

John shakes his head violently, at a complete loss for words. He doesn’t know how Sherlock can stand here in front of him, after everything John has just said to him, after everything John accused him of, and tell John about how wonderfully he treats Sherlock. It’s not right. Sherlock shouldn’t be thanking John for being different from everyone else, because John isn’t different from everyone else. He still hurts Sherlock in just the same ways. More, even, because he has a piece of Sherlock that no one else does. He has Sherlock’s heart. And he keeps hurting it.

“No, Sherlock. I’m sorry, I’m so sorry.” He pulls far enough away from the boy so that he can lower his face to Sherlock’s and kiss him, kiss him all over. On his soft cheeks and his smooth forehead and his pointy chin; the tip of his perfect nose and the small frown between his thick eyebrows and his soft, soft lips. “God, how can you still stand to be with me, after everything I’ve done and said to you?” John asks against Sherlock’s mouth, kissing him between words. “I don’t deserve you. You need so much better.”

Sherlock kisses him back, trusting and caring and so innocent that it breaks John’s heart a little bit. “What I need, John, is you.” Sherlock tells him on a whisper, bringing his hands up to tangle in John’s short blond hair. “You’re the only one who knows what it’s like to live a life filled with loneliness and hurt.” He kisses John again, deep and fervent, their tongues meeting in a tangled mess and their hands gripping each other tightly. When Sherlock pulls away from John he is panting but his eyes are shining brightly as he looks John straight in the face. “You’re a soldier
and I’m a fighter, John,” Sherlock whispers to him, hands clutching tighter at the front of John’s jacket. “And, together, we can make it through anything.”

*

He ends up having to catch a cab back to where his car is—all the way across town at a shop that is closed down now—when he finally leaves Sherlock’s house. By the time he gets home, milk-less, it is ridiculously late and he wonders for the first time why Mary hasn’t texted or rang him to see where he has been all night. As he takes off his jacket to hang by the door, he pulls his mobile out of his pocket and tries to check it for any missed messages but sees that it has died. He spares a moment to panic and wonder how long it has been off, but then he finds that he is far too tired to care. He stops by the kitchen for a quick drink to soothe the stomach-roiling guilt he still feels, but the burn of the liquor as he swallows isn’t strong enough to numb the pain of it all. He puts the bottle up and climbs the stairs to his room wearily, a slight twinge in his leg after the long, trying day he has gone through. When he opens the door to his bedroom, he finds Mary curled up on the bed, sound asleep. He undresses quietly and slips in gently beside her, careful not to wake her. The last thing he wants tonight is to have to deal with her after everything that has happened earlier.
John pulls back the worn duvet of the guest room’s bed and wearily crawls in, sighing heavily. He closes his eyes and brings his hands up to rub his face, feeling the tight furrows of his brow. Tonight’s row had been a big one, even by their standards. Messy and loud and hurtful. It began first thing that morning with rude, angry remarks about the previous night and John’s dead mobile, his inability to let Mary know where he was, the ridiculous amounts of time he has been spending away from home. The snide, bitter comments continued throughout the afternoon as John spent the last day of his weekend at home, knowing he had already pushed his luck with sneaking off to see Sherlock. He hadn’t answered Mary back, refusing to play her little game. He just stayed at home and ignored her; in all honesty, he thinks he is getting pretty good at that. During dinner, though, everything came to a head, an entire day’s worth of frustration and anger bottled up inside of him and finally releasing. He can’t even remember now how it had escalated so quickly, but it doesn’t really matter.

His cheek still stings sharply from where Mary slapped him. That had been the end of it. He had looked at her in shock for a second before turning right around and leaving the room, making up the spare bedroom so that he could spend the night away from her. They were hardly ever physical in their fights, and whenever they were, it was usually inanimate objects that got the brunt of their anger. Pictures and certain prized possessions. A few times Mary would stoop to throwing something in John’s general direction—sometimes hitting him with it but mostly not—but they had never raised their hands to one another.

As he lies in the cold bed he thinks back tiredly on their life together and how they had been happy once, a long time ago. He wonders when his wife had turned into a person he doesn’t even recognise anymore, and if she thinks the same about him. But it is late and he is drained and weary, so he tries hard not to dwell on it and prepares himself for sleep. Their last row had started shortly after dinner and they have been at it for hours, and he has work in the morning.

Just as he is about to reach over and switch off the bedside lamp, John hears a soft sliding sound on the other side of the room. He turns quickly to the window there and sees the dark shape of what seems to be a person, but it is pitch black outside and the light of his lamp is reflecting off of the glass, obscuring his view. He tenses in his bed, body preparing to fight an intruder before he suddenly realises that it is Sherlock crouching on the branch of the oak tree in his front yard, quietly prying the window open.
“Christ!” John says, struggling to sit up in the bed, heart pounding rapidly. “Sherlock, what the fuck?” He keeps his voice down to a hard, angry whisper, straining his ears to hear if Mary is moving around the house. He had heard her retire shortly after he had entered the guest room, though, and knows she is probably asleep by now.

“Why the hell are you breaking into my house in the middle of the night?” John hisses, throwing the covers off of himself and moving to sit on the edge of the bed. “Do you know how dangerous that is? What if I had thought you were a burglar?” He doesn’t tell the boy that if Sherlock had done this while John had been in the main bedroom, Sherlock would have a face full of the barrel-end of a gun right now. John keeps the service piece he had managed to smuggle out of the Army after his discharge loaded in the drawer of his nightstand, by his bed, for reasons which he doesn’t ever really dwell on.

“I saw that you weren’t sleeping with Mary tonight, so I thought I would keep you company,” Sherlock answers, unfazed by John’s quiet wrath. He finishes climbing in through the window and straightens his clothing into place.

“‘You saw’?” John repeats, confused. “What do you mean? Have you…have you been spying on me while I’m at home?” he asks incredulously.

“I wouldn’t call it ‘spying’,” Sherlock says with a dismissive wave of his hand and a roll of his eyes. “And it’s not like I do it often. Only every once in a while, and I mostly just sit outside your house for a bit and then leave. I just happened to be doing it tonight and saw that you and Mary were having a bit of a domestic”—was that ever an understatement, John thinks with a silent scoff—“and then I saw you come in here.” He shrugs, as if everything after that should be self-explanatory. “I know this isn’t your main bedroom, so I thought I would take advantage of the situation.”

“That window was locked,” John points out, still confused as hell. It is slightly surreal to have Sherlock here, inside his house in the middle of the night. “How did you--?”

“Please, John,” Sherlock says with a derisive scoff as he turns back towards the window and pushes it closed once more. “Standard window latches aren’t exactly high security. You should look into buying something a little more impenetrable.”

While John is staring at him in confused wonder, Sherlock moves across the room to latch the lock on the guest room door, turning back to give John a predatory smile. “Mind if I join you in bed?” he asks, one thick eyebrow raised suggestively.

As it turns out, John minds that very much.

“Sherlock, you can’t do that!” he hisses once again, heart thudding in his chest once he realises the severity of their situation and just what exactly it is that the boy wants to do. “My wife is asleep right down the hall!”

But Sherlock acts as if he hasn’t heard John at all. He walks towards the bed, shedding clothes as he goes until he is completely naked by the time he reaches John. Sherlock lifts the duvet and settles down into the bed next to the older man, seemingly unaware that John has not budged up to give him any room. When Sherlock tries to wrap his arms around John to push him into lying down with him, the man finally comes to his senses.

“You have to go,” John says firmly, shaking his head and bringing his hands up to push Sherlock away from him. “You can’t stay here.”
But Sherlock only drags the man down onto the bed and burrows into John’s side, burying his face in the crook of John’s neck. “I can’t go,” he whispers against John’s skin, and he suddenly sounds slightly scared, his deep voice wavering somewhat. “I have nowhere to go to. He came back home from the pub completely rat arsed again and threw a fit. He tore through the house—everything—wrecking all of it.” John doesn’t even have to bother asking who Sherlock is talking about. Something tightens in his stomach and he wraps his arms around the boy soothingly, not saying a word, just letting Sherlock continue. “All of my equipment, my experiments. I didn’t know what else to do so I left.” Sherlock’s voice sounds wet and broken and John hugs him tighter. “This was the only place I could think of to come. The only place I…felt safe. Please don’t make me go. Don’t leave me alone.”

“No, darling, no,” John whispers into the crown of the brunet head as he pulls Sherlock closer to him, ashamed that he had wanted to simply kick the child out without even bothering to know why Sherlock was there in the first place. “You don’t have to go. I won’t make you, I promise. I won’t let you go.”

Sherlock makes a soft sound against John’s neck that might be a sob of relief and tries to shift closer to John. The man finally relents, without a second thought now, and budges up on the bed, making room for Sherlock to lie comfortably next to him.

“Does he do this often?” John asks, voice low. “Come home in a rage?”

Thankfully Sherlock shakes his head, his curly hair tickling John’s cheek. “Not too often. The last time it was this bad was the night you took me to hospital. There have been smaller incidents but not as big as this one.”

John’s arms tighten protectively around the teen at the reminder of the time that Sherlock had phoned him in the middle of the night, asking for his help. “You said you come here sometimes and sit outside my house. Do you do that when he gets like this?” he asks, curious.

Sherlock’s answer is a soft whisper against John’s skin. “Yes.”

John suddenly feels ashamed and disgusted with himself. “God, Sherlock, I’m so sorry,” he says. “You come to me for help and I don’t do anything—I don’t even know you’re here. I’m so sorry.” John’s apology seems to be too much for Sherlock to bear because the younger male suddenly takes a shuddering breath against John’s neck that sounds like it may turn into a whimper. “Shh, it’s all right, you’re safe,” John whispers to him, running his fingers through the soft, curly hair. “Just close your eyes. No one can hurt you now. Not here. Not while you’re with me.”

While Sherlock burrows into John’s body, the man wraps his arms even tighter around the thin frame and frowns deeply, thinking silently. He just doesn’t understand it. He doesn’t understand how someone like Sherlock, who seems so impenetrable, so untouchable, can be reduced to a shuddering, shaking mess in John’s arms. Sherlock isn’t meant for this, he is meant for so much more. He can be so much more, if he is given half a chance. John wants to make sure that Sherlock has all the chances he needs. He doesn’t want anything to stop Sherlock from living his life, from being happy. He doesn’t want all the shadows of the boy’s past to kill that light in his eyes.

“Nights like this, I become afraid, John,” Sherlock mumbles into his chest suddenly, as if sensing what John is thinking about. “Of my father, of where my life is headed, of myself. Of that darkness in me, the one that wants to just give up, the one that wants the drugs. It scares me and I don’t know how long I can fight it anymore. I think this life would kill me, John, if I didn’t have you.”
It frightens John to hear Sherlock talk like this, scares him more than the war, more than getting shot. The thought of Sherlock giving up, giving in, losing himself. He doesn’t want to think about it. “No, Sherlock, you can fight it,” he assures the youth in his arms, hugging him tight, protecting him against everything outside this room, the uncontrollable fire that is trying to consume both their lives. “You have me now. I’ll help you. I’ll always help you. You know that.”

He’ll do anything, he knows, anything at all, to keep Sherlock safe. To make the boy feel that he isn’t alone any longer. John will be a bright flame in the middle of Sherlock’s darkness and he will burn away anything that tries to hurt the child. Sherlock has to see that. He wants Sherlock to see that.

They lie there quietly for a long while, just holding each other, until John feels Sherlock’s tense body start to relax in his arms. Only when this happens does John loosen his hold on Sherlock, pressing a kiss to Sherlock’s forehead, on top of unruly, dark curls. Sherlock takes advantage of the slight space between their bodies now to run his hands up and down John’s sides, over his back. Suddenly Sherlock’s roaming hands sweep across to his stomach, then lower, ghosting over John’s groin on top of his boxers. John thinks that it may have just been accidental so he doesn’t say anything, but when Sherlock palms his soft cock through his pants, John pulls away quickly.

“Sweetheart, no,” he states calmly with a small shake of his head. “We can’t.”

But Sherlock won’t be deterred. He shifts closer to John, his large, warm hand reaching for John’s prick again. “Please,” he whispers, finding what he is looking for. John can’t stop the groan that escapes his throat as Sherlock softly strokes his flaccid cock through his underwear. “I want to.”

It takes all of John’s willpower to remember why they shouldn’t be doing this, and he tries to fight Sherlock once more, although he doesn’t even bother to pull away from the teen this time. He knows it’s more than futile. “You’re not feeling right,” John points out and hopes to God that Sherlock will see reason. “Your emotions are all muddled up and you’re scared. I don’t want to take advantage of you.” He’s not even worried about Mary overhearing them anymore. That thought has long since fled his mind.

Sherlock doesn’t seem to care about John’s arguments though. He simply strokes John’s rapidly filling cock faster, leaning across the pillow to kiss the man, his lips wet and hot against John’s. “Please, I need this,” he begs John. “I need you. I need you to take me, keep me, make me feel safe. I’m not scared any longer, John. Not with you here. I really want to do this.”

And that’s all it takes for John’s composure to break. His hands suddenly tighten on the bony shoulders under his fingers and he drags Sherlock across the small space that separates them, bringing the teen closer. He kisses Sherlock desperately, hard and rough, and Sherlock whimpers softly against his mouth as John rolls to hover above him, weight braced on his knees between Sherlock’s thighs and his hands on either side of the curly head.

Sherlock clutches at John’s shoulders desperately, opening himself up to John’s kiss. His long fingers tangle in John’s soft grey sleep shirt and he spreads his thighs farther apart, welcoming the feel of John against his warm body. John braces his weight on one hand while he reaches down to pull his pants off with the other.

Under him, Sherlock arches into his body, seeking John’s touch. John kisses Sherlock’s perfect mouth, groaning quietly at the taste. He will never get tired of it, he knows. His tongue comes out to lick at that gorgeous cupid’s bow, slipping in between the brunet’s lips as Sherlock allows him entrance into his mouth. He dips his tongue in only briefly before he brings it back to run along Sherlock’s bottom lip.
He loves Sherlock’s lips. They are perfection. Absolute perfection. He can’t wait for the day that he can have them around his cock finally. He wonders what that flawless heart-shape will look like stretched around the length of his shaft, but he already knows the answer:

Beautiful. Absolutely fucking beautiful.

He finally manages to wiggle out of his pants but instead of throwing them to the ground he keeps them in his hand as he lets his arm settle back to Sherlock’s side, holding his weight evenly now.

“Want to try something new?” he asks Sherlock with a small, shy smile. He hadn’t wanted to do it this way, here in his guest room with his wife sleeping down the hallway, but now that he has Sherlock in his bed, he knows he won’t be able to wait. He has been wanting to do this with Sherlock for too long.

Beautiful coloured eyes open blearily and go wide at the mention of something new. John wonders if Sherlock hopes they will finally have sex, and he holds back a chuckle at the teen’s impatience. It isn’t what John has planned, but he thinks Sherlock will enjoy what he is going to do all the same.

Under him, Sherlock nods his head vigorously, submitting completely to whatever John wants.

The trust that Sherlock puts in him takes John’s breath away.

“I just need to do a couple of things,” John mumbles against Sherlock’s mouth as he kisses him once more and then pulls away, leaning over to one of the bedside tables where a small bottle of hand lotion is laying. Both Mary and her sister are religious in their nightly application of moisturiser before bedtime, and Mary had put this bottle in the guest room in anticipation of her sister’s first visit to their new home.

John has never been more thankful for a bottle of lotion in his life.

He settles back in bed, on his side this time, and moves Sherlock about until he is spooning the younger male, Sherlock’s back to his chest. John shoves his discarded pants in front of Sherlock’s thighs, hoping that Sherlock won’t bunch them up as he writhes and that they will catch any semen that trickles over the lean, pale legs and down onto the bedding. He doesn’t want to have to take the guest bed’s sheets down to get washed. That would bring up some awkward questions, he knows.

When they are both lying against each other comfortably and John is content that most of their mess will be contained, he takes one arm and slides it underneath Sherlock, in the space created between his neck and the pillow. John’s arm immediately fits to curl up across Sherlock’s chest and he rests his fingers on the boy’s pectoral, cradling him against John and stroking the skin soothingly.

As they settle against one another, John takes the bottle of lotion and squeezes a generous dollop of the cool moisturiser out into his empty palm and then reaches down between their bodies, finding Sherlock’s thighs and pressing his fingers in between them, lifting his top leg up slightly. Sherlock tries to look back at him in confusion but John shushes him quickly and turns his hand over to rub the lotion on the skin at the inside of each of Sherlock’s thighs; first one leg, then the other.

“John, what—?” Sherlock begins, but John kisses the back of his shoulder and pulls his hand away from Sherlock’s thighs to rub the rest of the lotion over his own cock, slicking it up and getting it completely hard. Then he lines his body up with Sherlock’s so that they will fit properly, his chest and hips to Sherlock’s back and thighs, and presses Sherlock’s leg back down, shifting lower so
that his cock is trapped between Sherlock’s thighs.

“Oh,” Sherlock breathes, surprised.

John groans at the heat that is suddenly enveloping his stiff prick. When they wank, it feels amazing—every time, no question—but there is just something about the warmth of a body wrapped completely around his hard cock that surpasses everything else. He gives an experimental thrust and slides slickly through the tight space between Sherlock’s clenched thighs, the lotion making Sherlock’s skin smooth. John pants into Sherlock’s neck at the feel of it and reaches his lotion-smeared hand around to Sherlock’s front, gripping Sherlock’s cock and stroking him.

Sherlock has to shove his face into the pillow to quiet his moan.

“Shh, baby,” John whispers to him as he sets up a steady rhythm, thrusting his cock in between Sherlock’s thighs and wanking him in tandem. “You have to keep quiet. Understand?”

Sherlock whimpers and bites his bottom lip against another sound that wants to break out of his mouth, but he nods his head. When he is finally able to speak and not cry out in pleasure, he gasps out a strangled, “Yes.”

“There you go,” John murmurs praise, wanting Sherlock to know how proud he is that the boy can contain the sounds he makes.  “You know I love hearing you, but we have to keep quiet now. God, you feel so good.”

“John,” Sherlock sobs out quietly, and his thighs clench together tighter, crushing John’s cock between them.

“Oh, fuck,” John says through gritted teeth, trying to keep in the moan that wants to escape. He thrusts deeply against Sherlock, imagining what it would feel like to be thrusting into Sherlock’s arse like this, lying next to him this way, spooning Sherlock while he fucks him. He wonders if Sherlock would like being penetrated in this position, or if he would prefer to be fucked on his hands and knees.

John can’t stop the mental image that pops into his head at that thought: Sherlock kneeling on the bed for him, head shoved down into the pillows, weight braced on his shoulders as he reaches back with his hands to spread his arse open for John to fuck.

“Jesus Christ,” John pants out against Sherlock’s neck. The image in his head and the pressure of Sherlock’s thighs around him are both bringing him too close too fast. He can feel his orgasm building in the pit of his stomach, hot and tight and tingling. He speeds up the strokes to Sherlock’s cock, wanting him to come first, but the heat and tautness of Sherlock’s thighs are too much for John and he can’t hold his climax back any longer. He comes with a quiet gasp against Sherlock’s scapula, biting down on Sherlock’s skin to muffle his cry.

John rides out his orgasm with shallower thrusts between Sherlock’s thighs, and he can feel his semen smear all over Sherlock’s legs. Once John comes, Sherlock’s breath catches and John can feel the teen’s body tighten. Sherlock suddenly moans quietly as he climaxes and John moves his unused hand off of Sherlock’s chest and up to cover Sherlock’s mouth, trying to stifle the sound.

“Shh, darling, shh,” John repeats, stroking Sherlock’s twitching cock slower, fingers dragging through his come. He looks over Sherlock’s shoulder and down the length of his young lover’s body, happy to see that the boxers he had laid out on the bed caught most of their combined mess.

After he pumps the last of Sherlock’s orgasm out of the boy, John collapses back onto the bed,
panting and rolling over onto his back, away from the scorching heat of Sherlock’s body. With his clean hand, he rucks his sleep shirt up his stomach and under his armpits so that the sweat will dry and he can try to cool off. Then he reaches out to find Sherlock and drag the teen over to his side of the bed, holding him close.

He turns to press a lazy kiss to Sherlock’s forehead, and he can feel sweat on the boy’s brow as well. “I want to keep you safe, Sherlock,” John whispers against the smooth skin. “I want to protect you. I don’t ever want you to be scared or hurt again. Come here, baby.” He turns onto his side and helps Sherlock turn as well, so that John can spoon him again and hold him closer. He reaches in front of Sherlock and grabs his soiled pants, using a clean spot to wipe at Sherlock’s thighs and his own groin and hand, then tosses them to the floor. “I’ll keep you safe,” he mumbles into the back of Sherlock’s neck as they settle down to sleep, and he places a small, delicate kiss at the top of Sherlock’s spine. “Always.”

Sherlock hums happily and wiggles his bum against John’s groin contentedly. John reaches across Sherlock once more to turn off the bedside lamp and the room is thrown into a sudden semi-darkness. A faint glow filters in through the window from where Sherlock forgot to close the drapes, but John doesn’t mind; he can see Sherlock’s face like this and he thinks that he might enjoy watching the boy sleep for a while.

“It feels nice, lying here with you at night,” Sherlock confesses to the dark, and John can hear a sad smile in his voice, can see the edge of it from his position behind Sherlock’s back. “It makes this seem almost real.”

John frowns at that. “It is real, Sherlock,” he states bluntly, upset that Sherlock could possibly think otherwise. “My feelings for you are very real. You know that, don’t you?”

It takes Sherlock a moment too long to answer, and when he finally speaks his voice is soft and sad in the almost-blackness of the bedroom.

“I’m going to have to leave soon, before your wife wakes up,” he tells John, and the man has never heard him sound more miserable while making a deduction in the entire time that John has known him. “It will be like I was never even here. You’ll wash up to clean the smell of sex off of yourself, and you’ll be sure to pay extra attention to making up the bed, so that it looks like no one slept on this side. You’ll act like tonight never happened while you’re around her and at school.” He pauses for a moment and then asks, “Is that real, John? Because it doesn’t sound real to me.”

It breaks John’s heart to hear how reasonable Sherlock sounds about the whole thing. There is no arguing with what he is saying; John knows this. There is only John’s assurance to him in the dimness that surrounds them.

“This is real, Sherlock,” he says with conviction. He has never been more certain about anything in his life. “This is important and this matters to me. Deeply. It’s real to me. Is it—” he falters suddenly because, while he knows how he feels, he realises that he doesn’t really know how the genius beside him feels. “Is it real to you?”

For a long moment Sherlock doesn’t speak, and John holds his breath. But then Sherlock’s voice rumbles lowly and John can feel the vibrations of the deep timbre through his chest. “It’s real right now, John. Here, with you holding me. I wish we could stay like this forever.” Sherlock presses back against John’s warm body, and if John didn’t know any better he would say that Sherlock was trying to melt into him. “Don’t let me go, John. Please, don’t let me go.”

John wraps his arms tighter around the slim body, hugging Sherlock close. “I won’t,” he whispers into the nape of Sherlock’s neck. “I promise you. I won’t.”
They lie like that for a long time, neither speaking any longer but neither falling asleep, either. John can feel Sherlock’s chest rising and falling with his deep, even breaths, and he can feel Sherlock’s heart beat steadily underneath his hand where it is pressed to Sherlock’s sternum. He has the sudden, uncontrollable urge to say something, and he doesn’t think twice about it. He knows it is right, and he knows it is true, and he can’t think of a better time to say it than right now, while they are holding each other and preparing to sleep through the night for the first time with one another.

“I love you, Sherlock,” he whispers into dark, tangled hair, and once the words are out there is an eruption of butterflies in his stomach which only calms when he presses tighter against Sherlock’s back.

Sherlock doesn’t say anything for so long that John thinks he may have been wrong and that the teen actually did fall asleep. But then Sherlock speaks and his voice is sad once again.

“No, you don’t, John,” he states plainly, as if he is reciting facts about human anatomy. “You love the idea of me. You love the way I make you feel. The way you come alive around me. But when it’s all over and you’ve had your fill, you come back home, to your wife, to your life.” John can feel Sherlock shake his head; can hear it in the soft rustle of his curly hair against the pillow. “You don’t love me. You love what I give you.”

At that, John shakes his own head furiously, searching for the words that he so desperately needs Sherlock to hear. “You’re wrong. I do love you,” he says passionately, voice gone rough with emotion. “You don’t know what I feel, Sherlock, much as you like to think that you do. You don’t know what I think.” He pauses before he continues, so that Sherlock knows that John is completely aware of what he is saying out loud. “I love you. You don’t have to love me back—in fact, I would be surprised if you did. But don’t for one second try to tell me how I feel about you. Because you’d be wrong.” His voice has gotten harsher and harsher as he continues to talk until he realises that he sounds almost angry by the end of his speech. He brings a hand up to Sherlock’s chin to turn the teen’s face towards his own and kisses Sherlock harshly, afraid of saying something to ruin the moment.

Sherlock opens up to him beautifully, the way he always does, and John deepens the kiss. He puts all of his feeling, all of his emotion into it; if Sherlock won’t believe his words than maybe he will believe his actions.

By the time John pulls away they are both panting and John’s cock is trying to stir futilely to attention once more. Sherlock’s head stays twisted at what must be an uncomfortable angle as he continues to stare wide-eyed at John through the shadows of the room. John isn’t sure but Sherlock looks slightly surprised.

“Oh,” Sherlock breathes out in wonder, bright eyes searching John’s face. “You truly do, don’t you?” he asks in amazement.

John stays silent because he won’t drag his pride through the mud answering Sherlock when he’s already told him.

“Say it again,” Sherlock commands, and his deep voice is breathless.

Pride be damned.

“I love you, Sherlock.” John’s tone is steady and clear and his chin is raised, mouth set in a thin line and nerves steeled like he is preparing to go into battle.
There is a long pause where Sherlock does nothing but continue staring at John, and just when the man is about to break the stillness, Sherlock speaks quietly.

“I love you, too, John,” he whispers, and it sounds like he is sharing a well-kept secret.

John’s heart flutters so rapidly he thinks that it may shatter against his ribcage. Something warm blooms in the pit of his stomach, bright and blazing. The glow of it is like the burning end of a midnight cigarette; a small, incandescent point of light in the darkness. He jostles Sherlock into turning around so they are facing each other and then he wraps his arms around Sherlock’s frail body once more, warming him, covering him. John knows he will always cover Sherlock, protect him. Then he proceeds to kiss the breath out of the boy’s very lungs.

Sherlock hums against his mouth happily and doesn’t put up a fight.

Once they have had their fill of each other, sometime later, John snuggles up against Sherlock, curled around him. Their legs and feet tangle together beneath the sheets contentedly. He doesn’t want to ruin the moment with any of his stupid worries and insecurities, but he feels that Sherlock has the right to know what he is getting himself into by falling for a man like John Watson.

“You have to understand, Sherlock,” he says softly, “that all of this stuff, everything with Mary and my marriage and my disaster of a life…it’s all my fault. I have a way of breaking everything around me.” Sherlock lifts his head to look at John contemplatively through the semi-darkness, not saying a word, eyes deducing in that silent way of his. “I just wanted you to know, because I don’t want you to get hurt. Just…keep that in mind, will you? And if you ever feel like you have to leave me,” John’s voice cracks at the very thought, but he continues on as if he hasn’t heard it, “then I won’t hold it against you. All right?”

Sherlock doesn’t answer him; he simply keeps looking at John silently. He is quiet for so long that John begins to drift off into sleep against his will.

As John slips into slumber he thinks he hears Sherlock say something; the words are clear enough to understand but John is already in that place between wakefulness and dreams where everything is foggy and relaxing, unreal and unearthly.

“You won’t break me, John,” Sherlock whispers to him from the waking world. “I’m already broken.”

*  

When John wakes up in the morning it is to an empty bed. The spot Sherlock occupied last night is cold now, and John wonders for a moment if he had imagined it all. But the evidence of it still clings somewhat to his hand and his groin, letting him know it was real.

And when he crawls out of bed, he does all of the things that Sherlock said he would, sweeping away any trace of Sherlock ever being there, anything that made it real.
Bonfire Heart

Chapter Notes

Warnings: Brief discussion of daddy kink, and unprotected sexual practices.

Thanks to iriswallpaper for the beta and Indelible_Ink for the Brit-pick. Chapter title is taken from the song "Bonfire Heart" by James Blunt.

“When we finally have sex, I want to do it without a condom,” Sherlock states as soon as he opens the door for John. The man hasn’t even gotten to Sherlock’s front step before the teen has thrown open the door from inside his house and greeted John in such a bizarre way.

“Well hello to you, too, Sherlock,” John says with a slight smile. He didn’t have Sherlock’s class today, so this is the first time John’s seen him all day. He wonders briefly when exactly it was that they had reached the point in their relationship where they didn’t feel slightly awkward seeing each other for the first time, knowing what they would soon be doing in Sherlock’s room, and quickly finds that he doesn’t really care.

Sherlock waves a dismissive hand as he steps away from the door and lets John into his house. “Yes, yes, hello,” he responds casually. Then immediately, “Can we?”

John sighs as he enters the house because he thought that he had already put an end to this conversation earlier, but it seems not. “We talked about this already,” he says, trying not to sound frustrated as he makes his way straight to Sherlock’s bedroom.

Sherlock follows behind him like a puppy, practically bouncing in his excitement to discuss this topic once again. “I know we did, but you didn’t really let me say anything about it,” he says in a rush, as if he is afraid John is going to cut him off again. “You wouldn’t even hear me out.”

Sherlock is right, of course. John had been so scared of caving to Sherlock’s demands the last time the subject was brought up that he had automatically said “no” and left no room for discussion. “If you still don’t want to do it after we talk about it, like adults,” Sherlock stresses the word, as if that will make John feel any better about the situation, “then I won’t bring it up again. I promise. Just, please, can we at least discuss it?”

John sighs again as he enters Sherlock’s bedroom and settles on the chair by the desk, but this time it is a sound of defeat. “That’s a big decision to make,” he tells Sherlock seriously. “It essentially means that you trust me enough to risk your health every time we have sex, and the same for me.” John wants to be sure that Sherlock knows exactly what it is he is asking of John.

Sherlock nods his head eagerly, as if to say that he understands. His eyes are aglow, sea-foam green in the light of the sun that is streaming in through his window. “I trust you,” he says confidently, without a moment’s hesitation. “I know you had never cheated on Mary before me. And I also know you won’t cheat on me. Besides, I’d be able to tell if you did, anyways. You wouldn’t be able to hide it from me,” he finishes rather ominously.

John tries not to think about how unsettling that thought is. “What if Mary decides she wants to have sex with me again?” he asks, wanting to be sure that Sherlock is aware of everything that
could happen in this situation. “I won’t exactly be able to say no to her without it looking suspicious—she’s still my wife.”

Sherlock just makes a derisive noise in the back of his throat at John’s suggestion that such a thing might ever happen. John tries not to be offended by it. “Truthfully, the chances of that are sod all,” Sherlock responds. “And besides, you say you won’t really be able to say no because she is still legally your wife, but I know you. You won’t want to engage in intimate relations with her to start with, much less be able to achieve an erection with her. You’re not that kind of person. If you don’t love her anymore, you won’t have sex with her,” Sherlock explains to him, as if John doesn’t know any of this about himself. “If you love me now, you won’t have sex with her. That’s just who you are. So that issue isn’t a concern at all.”

John tries to calm his heartbeat as it races in his chest with the fact that Sherlock knows so much about him, that Sherlock cares enough to learn these things. His stomach tightens pleasurably when he hears Sherlock talk about John loving him. To hear it said out loud is nearly breathtaking. “Yeah, all right,” he says tenderly, because Sherlock is starting to win him over, just like he knew he would, and John isn’t even upset about it. “But what about you? That doesn’t mean you won’t find someone else your own age that you have more in common with.”

Sherlock just rolls his eyes at that. “Please, John. I don’t have anything in common with people my own age, you know that.” He looks away from John for the first time since they started having this conversation, and John can see a slight blush creeping across his face. “Besides, you don’t have to worry about that with me. Even if I did find someone other than you—though that is a near impossibility—I would never cheat on you.” He looks at the man and his mouth is set in a stern line. “I won’t do to you what she did,” he promises. “I’ll give you that much courtesy.”

A part of John likes the fact that Sherlock isn’t sitting there saying that he will never ever leave John. Sherlock acknowledges the fact that it could be a possibility, but reassures John logically that he will respect their relationship, at the very least. Which is for the best: John has heard enough promises of fidelity to last him a lifetime. Which Sherlock probably knows.

Despite his earlier objections, John is coming to find that Sherlock’s arguments are making perfect sense and having sex without a condom is definitely something that his mind—and his cock—likes the thought of. A distant part of himself—something that hasn’t been beaten into submission by his teenage tyrant of a lover—is slightly appalled that he is even considering Sherlock’s request, but he stomps that out quickly enough.

“You still have to get tested before we can do it,” he says sternly, because this is something that he will not budge on. Full stop. “I know you’re a virgin, but you were also an intravenous drug user. Better safe than sorry, you know? I’ve already—”

“I know you’ve been tested,” Sherlock cuts him off, a manic light in his eyes now that John has acquiesced to his demands. “You haven’t slept with Mary in over a year but you got yourself tested after the last time. Considering her serial adultery and your health consciousness, you most likely got tested quite frequently when you were still having semi-regular sex with her. I also know that your results came back clean because you didn’t end this discussion right at the start.”

John stares at the genius for a moment, stunned as usual. He doesn’t think he will ever get used to Sherlock doing that.

“You’re brilliant, you know that?” he asks with a grin.

“I’ve been told a time or two,” Sherlock responds, even though the question was mostly rhetorical.
John chuckles softly and holds out his arms in a silent invitation for Sherlock to come sit on his lap. The teen moves towards him without a second thought, coming up to John and straddling his legs as he lowers himself onto the man’s thighs so that they are face to face. “All right,” John starts as he settles into the chair more comfortably with the new addition of Sherlock’s long body. “We’ll just wait for you to get tested and then we can—”

“I’ve already done it,” Sherlock cuts him off with a secret smile that John just wants to kiss right off his face. “I’ve got the results in and everything. Clean,” he states proudly.

John frowns at that and shakes his head in confusion. “You…what? The results can take up to two weeks if you visited a regular GP, when did you—?”

Sherlock blushes noticeably and cuts John off again, but this time it is more out of embarrassment than anything else. “About a week after the day I first told you that I had feelings for you. I wanted you, and I knew I would have you eventually; I didn’t want anything to stop us from being with each other completely when the time came.”

John stares at Sherlock in something that is close to dismay. “That’s…a bit intense,” he says slowly. He knows that Sherlock doesn’t understand normal social boundaries, but John would think that this seems to come on a little strong even to someone who has never dated before.

Sherlock just smiles, though, as if nothing is amiss. “No,” he responds with a small shake of his head. A few curls sweep across his forehead. “Just good planning.” He leans forward to kiss John and any arguments that the man was going to make are promptly thrown out the window.

“Do you want to know the best part?” Sherlock asks as he pulls away, a sly smile on his wicked lips.

“Do I?” John asks cautiously. He knows that look on Sherlock’s face. Knows that it means someone, somewhere, has been made a fool of. John hates that look because it usually is done in reference to him.

“I think you might find it interesting,” Sherlock answers, his sharp smile growing to an all-out devilish grin. He squirms in John’s lap, rubbing their clothed crotches together happily as he divulges his secret to John. “I went to the clinic that Mary works at to get it done. I had your wife take down all my information about my past and current sexual partners.” He leans in closer, breath ghosting across John’s skin and sending shivers down the man’s spine. “I told her about you, John. What we’ve done. When we did it last. Then I had her draw my blood for the test that will let her husband come in my arse and my mouth.”

Jesus fuck, John thinks as he fidgets suddenly against the erection that seems to have instantly sprung to life in his trousers. The mouth on this boy is only outdone by his brain and his desire to play sick games with the people around him.

“Sherlock, that’s twisted,” he breathes out, caught somewhere between arousal and horror, but he thinks the arousal might be winning. “And hot as hell. You dirty little angel, come here,” he growls as he grabs at Sherlock’s shoulders and pulls the boy back towards his mouth. There is something decidedly filthy about the thought of Sherlock telling his wife about their affair without her realising that John doesn’t want to dwell on for too long, but his thickening prick seems to find the idea disturbingly intriguing.

Sherlock goes willingly enough, melting into John’s chest as the man wraps his arms around the brunet and kisses him deeply. They sit there, snogging intensely while Sherlock straddles John’s lap. Sherlock is the first to grind down against John’s prick, but John doesn’t let him be the only
one for long. John thrusts up into the brunet above him readily enough, and his trapped cock presses against the seam of Sherlock’s jeans right below the plush arse. Sherlock gasps suddenly at the hardness that is poking him in an area that John has never touched before.

Without another thought, Sherlock rips his own t-shirt off, tossing it somewhere behind John onto the floor of his bedroom before starting to work on John’s navy blue cardigan. He growls in frustration as he undoes the buttons on the outer layer and realises that he has to contend with the buttons of John’s blue and white plaid dress shirt as well.

“Why do you wear these things?” Sherlock asks him as he practically tears at Johns’ clothing, his kisses becoming sloppy and off-target as his attention goes elsewhere.

“I happen to like them,” John chuckles as he lets Sherlock wrestle with his clothing for a moment before deciding that if he doesn’t step in, he’ll likely be down one shirt.

“They make you look like an old man,” Sherlock tells him, resuming his kisses once John begins working on his own clothing.

“Yeah, but you like old men,” John says, jokingly.

Sherlock shakes his head, grinding down into John’s lap once more and panting at the feeling of John’s hardness against his arse cheeks. “Just one. But he’s a dirty old man.”

“Oi!” John says in mock hurt but Sherlock simply groans into his mouth, hands coming up to pinch at John’s nipples through his vest and unbuttoned shirt.

“Absolutely filthy,” Sherlock moans, bending his head to lick a long, wet stripe up the side of John’s neck. The man practically melts into a boneless heap under the onslaught.

“Fuck, Sherlock, I love you,” John tells him, bringing his hands down to work at Sherlock’s jeans. It is the first time John has said it since the night that Sherlock snuck into his house and they fell asleep together. He doesn’t even really mean to say it right then; it just slips so easily out of his mouth. But his stomach flutters in happiness at the fact that he can say it now. So he says it again.

“I love you.”

Sherlock moans and dips his tongue into John’s mouth in response, as if he’s trying to taste John’s words.

John struggles to open the boy’s trousers as Sherlock writhes on top of him, still settled heavily in his lap. He loves the feeling of Sherlock’s long legs draped on either side of his hips, loves the weight of the teen on top of him, but he soon realises that this position doesn’t give him enough room to touch Sherlock the way he wants. He finally manages to pop Sherlock’s trousers open and pull down the fly, shoving just the front of the teen’s underwear down to catch beneath Sherlock’s scrotum, letting his bollocks hold the clothing in place. John’s hand pumps up and down Sherlock’s engorged shaft but the man can’t comfortably fit his arm between their bodies, and he growls in frustration.

“Hold on to me,” he mumbles against Sherlock’s mouth.

Sherlock only has time to say, “Wh—?” before John is shoving his hands under Sherlock’s arse and pushing himself out of the chair with every bit of strength he has. It is not an easy position to shift to when one can’t use their hands for leverage, not to mention if they are carrying almost 9 stone of lanky teenage boy in their arms, throwing off their centre of gravity. Sherlock is still slightly
underweight, despite all John’s hard work to feed him up. He remains a bit thin, even after all of
the weeks of John trying to subtly ply the youth with too much sugar in his tea and every sort of
sweet under the sun in a desperate attempt to introduce all sorts of calories into Sherlock’s body.
More recently the doctor has managed to find biscuits and muffins packed with hidden protein that
Sherlock has no idea he is consuming, and John is sure to bring them over regularly. John has
delighted in watching Sherlock fill out slightly under his diligent care and gain a bit of desperately
needed weight, but it is slow work. He has come to find that Sherlock is quite the picky eater, and
it has been a bit of a challenge to find food that Sherlock will actually eat and enjoy. The genius
can claim that his body is merely “transport” and that food only slows his mind down, but John
knows that there are a lot of foods that Sherlock actually just doesn’t like eating. John has been
paying close attention—much more than Sherlock gives him credit for—and has been making note
of all of Sherlock’s little quirks when it comes to food, slowly learning what Sherlock will and
won’t eat. The list is growing rather long.

As John lifts him now, it is slightly awkward regardless of his weight; Sherlock is nearly the same
height as John and he brings his long legs up to hook together behind John’s back, but the man is
only moving them the short distance to the bed, so none of that really matters.

“John!” Sherlock gasps in surprise, and his arms wrap around the blond’s shoulders tightly—
maybe a bit too tightly—as he fights down his fear that John may drop him. By the time John
makes it to the bed, the two are laughing against each other’s mouths and John releases his arms
suddenly so that Sherlock falls to the bed with a winded oofh!

“Prat,” Sherlock says affectionately to him, chuckling as he bounces on the mattress.

John just smiles and crawls on top of him, hands automatically going to divest the teenager of the
rest of his clothing while Sherlock’s come up to do the same.

When he finally has Sherlock completely naked under him—his own trousers, underwear, and
socks shoved out of the way while his shirt and vest are, as ever, still firmly in place—he thinks
that now is as good a time as any to put their new decision into action. He shivers in anticipation as
he thinks of everything that they are now able to do with each other. He barely knows where to
start and has to remind himself once again to slow down; Sherlock is a virgin still, new to all of
these different sensations.

_Start with the basics, then_, John decides, and he is more than happy with that choice.

He runs a hand slowly up and down Sherlock’s hard cock, not gripping, simply touching, teasing,
driving the boy crazy.

“Does it feel good when I touch you here?” John asks him on a whisper.

Sherlock makes a strangled noise of assent and tries to buck up into John’s hand to gain more
friction, more pressure.

“Do you want me to show you something that feels even better?”

“Oh, God,” Sherlock cries out, as if in awe that anything else could feel any better than what John
is doing to him right now.

John smiles wickedly at him before dropping his head down over Sherlock’s crotch and breathing
across the sensitive, reddened flesh of the teen’s straining cock. Sherlock lets loose another
choked noise and his hips buck up involuntarily, seeking John’s mouth out.
John takes a moment to simply revel in the look of the other’s body, so perfect and tight and young. He smells amazing, musky and slightly sweaty, with something completely *male* underneath it all that John has missed over the years he has been married to his wife. His mouth almost waters as he remembers what it feels like to have a cock against his tongue, and he lets out a little moan when he realises that he isn’t about to suck just anyone’s cock—he is going to suck Sherlock’s.

Slowly, the tip of his tongue comes out to wet his lips and then drag across the head of Sherlock’s prick. The boy lets out a wail and his hands come around to tangle in John’s short hair, simultaneously pulling him away and pushing him down weakly as Sherlock takes in this strange new sensation, and it is easy enough for John to ignore the contradicting pressures. He has more important things to focus on, anyways.

He moves his face lower over Sherlock’s groin, bringing his closed mouth to the bottom of Sherlock’s shaft. He nibbles softly at the skin of Sherlock’s scrotum for a moment, at the spot where the wrinkled flesh turns smooth and tight at the base of his cock. Then he replaces the light pressure of his lips nipping the sensitive area with the feel of his tongue licking a long, wet line up the underside of Sherlock’s shaft, from root to tip. He swirls his tongue around the head once, slowly, before taking Sherlock’s cock in his mouth and sliding down it.

Sherlock very nearly screams.

John’s only warning is a loud cry of “*John, fuck!*” and a hard yank on his hair before Sherlock is coming in John’s mouth. The man is slightly surprised at how much ejaculate there is. He chokes on the last bit of it that he doesn’t manage to swallow down and some of it leaks past his lips and down his chin. He can’t remember being as young as Sherlock is and so new to sex, so he has nothing to compare the volume of the teen’s release to.

He sits back on his heels between Sherlock’s spread legs and wipes at the mess on his chin with his hand, cleaning it off. Sherlock is lying limp and almost lifeless on the bed, the deep rise and fall of his chest the only movement of his body. Sherlock’s cock is still hard and an angry red colour, shining brightly under the light of the room with semen and spit. John strokes himself as he lets Sherlock recover, not sure how much longer he will be able to wait for the other male.

But finally Sherlock stirs, his motor functions slowly coming back online. He turns his head to look at John and the expression on his face is pure bliss.

“That was brilliant,” he says, still slightly winded.

John would revel in the compliment, so few and far between from Sherlock, but there is something more urgent needing to be addressed. “Do you want to do me now?” he asks breathlessly, not even ashamed at how impatient he sounds. His balls are drawn up so tight that they are starting to ache.

Sherlock’s smile falters slightly at that and he looks down the length of John’s body to eye the man’s hard cock warily. “If…if you want me to,” he says shakily. Christ, how John wants him to. “I won’t be good; I don’t know what to do,” he finishes with a deep red blush.

John thinks it’s the most adorable sight he’s ever seen: Sherlock panting and sated, spread out on the bed below him, blushing as he talks about sucking John’s cock. John groans and slows his strokes along his shaft, afraid he’ll come right then. “It’s all right, love,” he says soothingly as he moves them to trade places, lying on his back while Sherlock lifts himself to his knees to hover over John. “I’ll teach you. Just do what I tell you to.”

Sherlock stares down at the cock in front of him for a moment and then looks up at John. “Will
you finish in my mouth like you let me do to you?” he asks, a little worried frown creasing the skin between his thick eyebrows.

John reaches out with the hand that he isn’t stroking himself with and runs his fingers down Sherlock’s soft cheek, then across his lips. He can’t believe he is finally going to be able to see what that sweet little cupid’s bow is going to look like stretched around his cock. “No, baby,” he reassures the boy. “Not this time. Don’t worry; we’ll take things slowly, like we always do. I don’t want you to be scared or uncomfortable.”

Sherlock lets out a little sigh of relief against the tips of John’s fingers and smiles shyly at the man stretched out below him. “All right,” he says, voice shaking slightly. “So what do I do?”

John has to bite his lip against the arousal that spikes through his body as he hears Sherlock ask him that. He doesn’t think he’ll ever get used to the boy’s innocence. He thinks it might kill him one day.

“Oh fuck, love, anything. Just put your mouth on me, please,” he moans, not able to take it any longer, and then he remembers that he is supposed to be instructing Sherlock. “The tip,” he pants out, stilling his hand in its strokes along his shaft. He holds his cock down by the base, lifting it away from his body so that Sherlock doesn’t have to use his hands for now. “Lick the tip. Softly, no teeth!” he remembers in a rush, and he is glad that he managed to get that warning out because as soon as that soft, warm tongue is on him John’s brain shorts out. He hears a sound that is deep and guttural and realises that it’s coming out of his own mouth.

“Jesus fuck,” he mutters, gripping the base of his cock harder to try to stave off his impending orgasm. There is too much that Sherlock still needs to do before John wants to come.

Sherlock swirls his tongue around the tip of the head like John did to him earlier, but doesn’t go past the crown. His movements are jerky and unsure, but the warmth and wetness of his mouth more than make up for that, and he seems eager enough to learn what John likes.

“Take a little more into your mouth—shit, watch the teeth, love!” he hisses a bit as Sherlock’s front teeth catch on the edge of his retracted foreskin and Sherlock immediately pulls away.

“Sorry, I’m sorry,” the boy mumbles, eyes wide, and John hates himself for putting that look on Sherlock’s face.

“No, darling, it’s okay, I’m just,” he searches for a good word to describe how he feels right now. ‘Sensitive’ doesn’t seem to even begin to define it. “I’m just so close that everything feels more intense. You didn’t do anything wrong, it’s all right.”

Sherlock doesn’t look like he is put at ease.

John tries not to groan at the extended loss of that perfect mouth. He knows he needs to rein himself in or else Sherlock isn’t going to ever want to do this to him again but it’s so difficult. He wants so badly.

“Come on, baby, try again. Please,” he practically begs, and he sighs in relief when Sherlock bends over his cock once more.

“Just keep your lips over your teeth and you can suck me like that. Oh, fuck, yesss,” he trails off into a hiss as Sherlock descends halfway down his shaft. The heat of his mouth is exquisite, and John looks down the length of his body to see that Sherlock’s lips look exactly like he had imagined they would wrapped around his cock.
Absolutely fucking beautiful.

“God, Sherlock,” John pants, tearing his eyes away from the sight of the plush mouth around him before he comes right then. He squeezes the base of his cock harder, digging the tips of his fingers under his scrotum for good measure. He can feel his imminent orgasm recede slightly, but not enough. “You’re gorgeous, you know that, baby? Simply gorgeous.”

Sherlock lowers his mouth farther down John’s cock and the man can feel his lips pull into a smile at John’s praise. He groans.

“Swirl your tongue around, yeah like that. Good boy. Back up to the head now, do it again. God, that’s perfect. The tip, where the slit is—your tongue—oh fuck yes just like that.”

John is a panting mess after only a few minutes of Sherlock working on him, and he knows that he won’t be able to hold his orgasm off any longer. He reaches down to tangle his fingers in Sherlock’s soft hair and tug lightly on the curls, saying gently, “All right. Stop, love, before I come.”

Sherlock pulls off of him with a wet pop and John sucks in a breath at the sudden intense suction right before Sherlock lets him slip out of his mouth. The boy’s lips are shiny with spit and probably a fair amount of precome; John has been so hard for so long that he has been leaking freely and he wouldn’t be surprised if he has nothing left to ejaculate. Sherlock wipes at his mouth with the back of his hand and shifts his weight around over John’s legs, dragging his hard cock across John’s shin and moaning at the feel of it, sounding almost surprised.

“John, I’m—again,” he looks down at himself in wonder, as if shocked at how his own body is responding. John thinks it’s the most beautiful sight, to see Sherlock discovering his sexuality right in front of him. Even though John doesn’t recall much from his teenage years, he does remember being so randy all the time that he was able to get hard again only a short time after climaxing. It is one thing he envies Sherlock—he wishes he could still get hard after so little time between orgasms. If he had a shorter refractory period, he would fuck Sherlock so constantly that the teen would be perpetually sore.


John thinks about telling him no, making the boy deny himself release so that Sherlock can see another side of sex, a more complex side, but John decides against it quickly. Sherlock’s body is so inexperienced at holding back orgasms that it probably won’t even matter if John tells him to wait. Besides, he is mostly sure that Sherlock is only even asking in a literal sense—wondering if it is physically okay to do it again.

“Yeah, baby. You can finish again, it’s all right,” John tells him, running his own hand over his spit-slick shaft. The feel of it is simply amazing. “It’s more than all right—it’s wonderful. It drives me crazy that I can make you this way, Sherlock. God, it makes me so hard.” He pumps his cock faster as he feels Sherlock frot into his leg.

“One day I’m going to see how many times I can make you come in one night,” John promises him on a hushed murmur, bringing his idle hand up to card through Sherlock’s hair once again. Sherlock leans into his touch like a cat. “You’re so responsive that I bet I can get you off at least three times before your body runs dry. God, I want to drain you completely, show you how it feels. Will you let me?”

“Yes, John,” Sherlock cries out, eyes screwed shut. He ruts against John some more, trying to relieve some of the pressure John knows he must be feeling, much like himself. “Anything you
want, just please, make me go again. I can’t stand this.” He lets out a shuddery little sob and John finally takes pity on him. He wants to come so badly, and he thinks Sherlock deserves a reward after being such a good boy for him.

“Oh, baby, it’ll feel better soon, I promise. I’ll make it better. Come here.” He pulls Sherlock back up to his face, stilling him when he tries to lie on top of John chest to chest. “We’ll both finish together,” John says, and manoeuvres Sherlock’s body around so that he is turned the opposite direction as John, kneeling over him and straddling his torso, face to crotch.

Sherlock takes a moment to settle into the new, strange position, unused to not being able to see John’s face. “What do I do?” Sherlock asks, his voice shaky. His head is over John’s groin again and his mouth is so close to John’s cock that the man can feel the vibration of his newly-settled, deep voice along his prick.

“You’re hand, beautiful. Use your hand, like you normally do—it won’t take me long. Keep your mouth away,” he gives a final warning before he looks up at the delectable cock dangling over his face. Then he takes it back into his mouth and he can’t speak any longer.

“Ah!” Sherlock hisses as John sucks him in this new position, and his hand tightens over John’s cock, stuttering in its strokes but not stopping. From where he is lying, John can look up and see Sherlock’s perineum, smooth and pink and almost hairless, and farther up it dips down into the muscle of his arsehole, hidden from view in John’s current position. John has yet to see the little furl of skin, but he imagines it will be as perfect as the rest of Sherlock. Gorgeous and irresistible. He groans at the image in his mind, and the vibrations of the sound cause Sherlock’s body to tense above him and Sherlock’s hand to clamp down hard around his shaft as he cries out while he climaxes.

There isn’t very much left after his first orgasm and John swallows it all down, the mere taste of Sherlock on his tongue enough to send him over the edge finally. He thrusts into Sherlock’s fist as the other male lies unmoving on top of him. John’s orgasm rushes through him, setting his whole body alight and making his skin tingle. He had been so hard that the contractions of his muscles as he climaxes send waves of relief over him and he gasps around his mouthful of Sherlock as he rides the crest of his orgasm.

Slowly, after a long moment, John lets Sherlock’s softening cock slip out of his mouth. He leans his head far over to the side, so that his face isn’t being crushed by Sherlock’s groin and he can take in deep mouthfuls of air. It is an uncomfortable position, with his neck stretched far so that his head can rest on the barely-padded bone of Sherlock’s sharp hip, but at least he can breathe this way.

“I love you, sweetheart, but you’re going to have to move; you’re about to suffocate me with your crotch,” John grunts out as he tries to lift Sherlock’s hips off of him. Sherlock lets out a huff that might be a sound of indignation or a sound of exhaustion but wiggles off of John awkwardly nonetheless, unable to move properly so soon after climaxing twice in the span of a half hour.

He flops down on the bed beside John, dark hair fanning out against his white pillow, and turns to stare silently at John for a moment, contemplating something.

“Why do you do that?” he asks, and his tone is genuinely curious.

John frowns, not knowing what Sherlock is talking about. “Do what?” he responds with his eyes closed against the bright light of the bedroom.

“Call me…baby,” Sherlock answers, stumbling over his words slightly as he tries to explain his
“Oh,” John says, opening his eyes to look at Sherlock, wondering what brought this on. His brain is sluggish and slow from the amazing orgasm he just had and he doesn’t know how Sherlock is even coherent, after two of his own. “I dunno. I just…kind of like it, I guess. I’ve never really thought about it.” He shrugs awkwardly, as if to let Sherlock know that it’s nothing important. “Do you want me to stop?”

“Did you ever call Mary that? Did you ever call her any of the names you call me?” Sherlock asks back.

John pauses for a moment as he thinks. He has to go back pretty far in their relationship; it’s been so long since they’ve spoken a loving word to each other that he can hardly remember. “I used to call her ‘love’, I guess. But that was a long time ago. I haven’t done in a while. But I never called her any of the others. I never really felt the desire to.”

“Interesting,” Sherlock says cryptically as he turns his head straight up again so that he is staring at the ceiling now and not at John.

“What is?” John asks, cursing himself for opening this door because he knows that he’s not going to like what’s on the other side of it.

And he is correct.

“Slight daddy kink,” Sherlock says simply, as if what they’re talking about is no more exciting than the weather.

John gapes at him for a moment in abject horror, mouth hanging open ridiculously before he rouses himself into arguing with the kid. “No, now wait!” he cries out as he struggles to sit up in the bed. His voice is too loud for the small room, but he doesn’t really care right now. “Everything else you’ve ever deduced about me might be true but I do not have a daddy kink! That’s just disturbing.”

Sherlock turns to give him a look that says quite clearly “oh, please” before speaking in a disbelieving tone, “John, you call me ‘baby’ more than you call me anything else, but you only do it when we are in the middle of something decidedly filthy because you enjoy the contrast. It turns you on.”

The horror returns and brings with it a colossal blush of epic embarrassment proportions. “Lots of adults use ‘baby’ as a nickname for their partners on a regular basis,” John argues, hell bent on proving Sherlock wrong about this one. His relationship with Sherlock is already illegal and morally ambiguous thanks to his position as Sherlock’s teacher along with their age difference; he’ll be damned if he is going to be a sexual deviant, as well.

“Yes, but most adults aren’t saying it to their sixteen year old lovers,” Sherlock points out, and John hates him for all the calm, reasonable sense he is making. “If the thought of my age bothered you as much as you claim it does, you would do things to avoid certain terms of endearment or situations that would only highlight my youth. But you don’t.” He pauses for a moment and looks at John, as if trying to decide something, and John can see it in his face when Sherlock figures he should just say what’s on his mind and hold nothing back. “And you also like to tell me I’m a good boy,” Sherlock adds without a hint of shame as he tells John about the man’s own deepest, darkest secrets. “Your good boy, to be precise. Daddy kink,” he reiterates, as if it is obvious.

Sherlock smiles smugly and John wants nothing more than to melt into the sheets in
embarrassment. His face flames so much he can actually feel the heat of his blush against his hands as he hides behind the wall of his fingers and wonders how he is ever going to be able to face the genius again.

Sherlock simply continues to smile at him, though, not a single speck of judgment in his green-blue eyes. “It’s fine,” Sherlock assures him happily. “You can call me anything you want, as long as it means that I’m yours. I don’t mind any of it.”

He sits up to kiss John quickly before jumping off of the bed, energy level back up after only a few minutes of recuperating. John shakes his head and smiles at the vigor of the adolescent’s youth but stays in bed as Sherlock grabs up a mangled box of nicotine patches from his floor and takes one out before softly padding to his bathroom to wash up.

In truth, Sherlock’s deduction caught John so off guard because the man worries that it might be true. John will never tell Sherlock that he calls him those names partly because it does remind him that Sherlock is so much younger than him. A lot of the nicknames are endearments one would use for a child, John knows, and he likes the reminder that they suit Sherlock so well because he practically is a child still. Some redeeming part of John tries not to think about the fact that some of those names are something a parent might call their own kid, but he isn’t successful. “Baby” certainly is John’s favourite thing to call him, though he knows it’s one of the more ridiculous-sounding endearments when it’s meant to address Sherlock. But there is something slightly demeaning about it when said to someone so much more intelligent, so much sharper, so much more than John can ever hope to be. Sherlock has always been so good at submitting himself to John in bed that such diminutives have just seemed natural when addressing the boy. And John has always loved the way it feels to exert his authority over Sherlock in such a small, safe, inconsequential way. Calling Sherlock by those nicknames is almost as much of a turn on as touching him is. John loves it.

And maybe it is also because Sherlock looks so much like an angel, and John wants nothing more than to debauch that perfect innocence, that beautiful body, in any way that he can.

Is that a daddy kink? Is it something else? John has never thought of himself as having anything other than very vanilla sexual proclivities—bordering on boring, really—and he has always been okay with that. He has been satisfied with his mediocre sex life with Mary for ten years, having gotten some of the more creative urges out of his system when he was younger. But then Sherlock came in like a whirlwind and threw everything about, confusing the hell out of him and turning life-long habits on their heads.

John sighs as he rubs at his face, feeling completely and utterly lost all of a sudden. He doesn’t know what he’s doing anymore. Sometimes he hardly even feels like himself. He worries that he is losing touch with what makes him him, and it scares him sometimes that Sherlock has come into his life and completely rearranged everything, booting out old habits of John’s that Sherlock doesn’t like or deem worthy of keeping, and adding new ones that amuse or satisfy him.

He wonders if he should say something to Sherlock, wonders if he should voice his concerns, his fears. But as Sherlock walks out of his bathroom—stark naked, pale, and so unbelievably gorgeous that it simply blows John’s mind to think that the boy is his, that all of that belongs to him—John comes to realise that he could care less about losing himself completely to this beautiful creature.

He’d burn his whole life to the ground in an instant as long as he could start over again with Sherlock.

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Notes: I know they probably would have tested Sherlock at the hospital for STIs if they suspected any kind of abuse but I really wanted Sherlock to go to Mary’s clinic and have her draw the blood. ‘Cuz I’m just twisted like that.

I would also like to make a very special note about a line in this chapter:

During this chapter, when Sherlock first tells John that he thinks John has a daddy kink, John responds by thinking: “His relationship with Sherlock is already illegal and morally ambiguous thanks to his position as Sherlock’s teacher along with their age difference; he’ll be damned if he is going to be a sexual deviant, as well.” I would just to take this opportunity to say that any kinks are not deviant as long as they are safe, sane, and consensual. At this point in this story, John still feels guilty about his whole relationship with Sherlock and this is why he is connecting certain desires he has for Sherlock with being a “sexual deviant”. John’s views do not reflect the author’s own, and if he says something that offends you in this fic, I humbly apologize on his behalf. He is an idiot, as you will come to find out many times over, later in this fic.
Trying to Stop a Fire with the Moisture from a Kiss

Chapter Notes

Warnings: The beginning of this chapter starts off with some really heavy dirty talk and some pretty descriptive comeplay, just to give you fair warning. I don’t know what I was thinking…The start of this chapter is particularly dirty, apparently I have no shame, sorry. We’ll blame it on John's filthy mouth (which we all know I have no control over).

Beta'd by iriswallpaper and Brit-picked by Indelible_Ink. I rewrote a big portion of it towards the end, so, as usual, all mistakes are my own. Chapter title taken from the song "The Change" by Garth Brooks.

Sherlock’s body is young, still fresh from adolescence. Even though he must have started puberty a few years ago—if his voice is anything to go by—it seems that his vocal cords and his limbs are the only change that has been drastic. The rest of his body still looks soft and childish. He hardly has any pubic hair, and it is only noticeable because of its dark colour as it clusters all together right at the base of his penis, on the top of the small mound of his pubic bone. If there is hair around the rest of his genitals—his scrotum, his anus—it is still light and thin enough to be called peach fuzz and be barely noticeable. There is no hair on his chest save for maybe one or two random strays that stand proudly here or there, inconsistent and sparse. His skin is still springy and tight, not a wrinkle anywhere in sight, with a beautiful translucence and perfect unmarred flawlessness that John loves and is simultaneously jealous of. Sherlock still has the shadows of lingering baby fat that cling desperately to his body, but even that is starting to melt away as his metabolism has kicked into a higher gear and he has started developing more muscle tone. The chubby roundness of youth is still most apparent in his smooth and hairless face, mainly along the contours of his bare cheeks, but John knows that will soon fade.

John wonders if Sherlock grows enough hair on his face to even require shaving on a regular basis. He runs his fingers and the head of his cock across the smooth, stubble-free skin and figures that Sherlock must not. He shivers deliciously as he guides his prick past Sherlock’s plump lips and into the warm, wet cavern of his pliant mouth.

“Yeah, sweetheart, just like that. Just like I showed you last time, take it all,” John murmurs, voice soft and low, fingers combing through Sherlock’s curly hair and tracing the sloping curves of his beautiful face. He is on his knees on Sherlock’s bed, body bent over Sherlock’s head as the boy lies prostrate across the sheets. John’s good arm is propping himself up over Sherlock while he feeds his prick into Sherlock’s mouth with his other hand. “Good boy. You’ve learnt to take my cock so well.”

Sherlock works his mouth over John’s shaft intently, pushing himself past his limits and gagging a tiny bit as he tries to take more of John than he is able to. He coughs and pulls off of John’s cock suddenly, a bit too fast, and John lets out a small hiss.

“No teeth, remember?” John tells him, but he caresses the side of Sherlock’s face to let him know he’s not mad. “Keep them covered, there’s a good lad. Perfect,” he moans as Sherlock goes back to sucking and licking him, determined to prove his skills to the older man.
John doesn’t mind the attempt at all.

“I want you to touch yourself while I fuck your face,” he tells Sherlock suddenly, enjoying the way Sherlock’s breath catches around his mouthful of cock and his eyes go wide as he stares up at John, tongue still working John’s shaft. “Go on, it’s all right,” John encourages softly. He reaches a hand down as far as he can to grab Sherlock’s wrist, where his arm has been resting idly on John’s thigh for better leverage, and pushes it towards Sherlock’s own prick, which is engorged once again. “I just want to see, it’s all right.”

Sherlock has already come once this afternoon, but John will bet good money that he can make the Sherlock climax again. John probably wouldn’t even break a sweat doing it. He absolutely loves that Sherlock’s body is on a hair-string trigger whenever John touches him.

Sherlock does as he is told and begins stroking himself—slow, lazy sweeps that drive John crazy to watch. Sherlock likes to pinch the head of his cock between his thumb and index finger on every upstroke, and the movement squeezes beads of precome out of his slit. He swipes his fingers through the fluid to wet them before stroking back down his length, slicking himself along the way.

“Fuck, you’re so beautiful,” John tells him, panting harder as the sight and the feel of Sherlock’s mouth bring him closer to the edge. “Gorgeous, everything about you. Is your jaw starting to get tired, love? I can feel it tensing up around me. It’s okay, just keep it relaxed. More. A little more. There, perfect. I know it’s uncomfortable but we have to build up your endurance somehow, don’t we? Because one day soon I want to be able to fuck your face at length, take as long as I want.” Sherlock moans at that and works his mouth faster over John, apparently keen on that particular idea. In his excitement, though, his hand has stilled over his own prick and John immediately rectifies that problem. “Keep touching yourself, darling, I want to see, remember? Amazing. You’re amazing. I love you so much.”

Sherlock resumes stroking himself and John can’t help the small thrusts that he starts to make with his own hips, pushing his cock deeper into Sherlock’s mouth with each movement. He remembers, though, that Sherlock still can’t take much of his length, and so he keeps his thrusts shallow, making sure not to choke Sherlock. But the act of fucking Sherlock’s face swiftly becomes too much for John, and he pulls away from the warm mouth suddenly, before he accidentally spills down Sherlock’s throat. The brunet isn’t expecting John’s retreat and his mouth is still open as he stares up at John in confusion, wondering where his cock went. John quickly sits back on his heels so that he is sure he won’t accidentally get any come on Sherlock and pumps his cock once, twice before he is climaxing into his own hand with a groan and stroking himself through his orgasm. His fingers drag slickly across his prick as he runs his hand up and down his own length, making a mess of himself.

When John looks back down at Sherlock, glass green eyes are staring widely at his come-covered cock, which is almost still level with Sherlock’s own face. The tip of Sherlock’s pink tongue darts out to lick at his full lips unconsciously and John suddenly has the most wicked desire.

“Do you want to taste it, angel?” he asks sweetly as he drags his fingers through his own mess while it drips down his softening cock. He loves the contrast of his words against the endearments. The filthier his sentences are, the sweeter he wants the pet name which he uses to be. “I’ll let you. Come on, open up, beautiful.”

Sherlock doesn’t need to be told twice. He opens his mouth obediently and waits patiently for John’s instructions. John brings his dirty hand over to hover above Sherlock’s lips and dips just the tips of his index and middle finger into the hot wetness of Sherlock’s mouth.
“Lick it off of me,” John instructs him, and he instantly feels Sherlock’s tongue come up to sweep over the pads of his fingers, cleaning them of the come that covers them. John shoves his fingers deeper into Sherlock’s mouth and Sherlock’s lips seal around his digits as he sucks the come off of John’s hand. “There you go. Ah ah, take all of it like a good boy,” John chastises as Sherlock gags slightly, whether from the strangeness of tasting come for the first time or the feel of John’s blunt fingers shoved down his throat, John isn’t sure.

“Yes, perfect,” John moans as Sherlock gains control of his gag reflex once more. He brings his tongue up to swirl between John’s fingers, searching for any drop of come that he has missed, and John smiles down at his lover proudly. “Do you like it, baby? If you do then maybe next time I’ll let you have all of it. I’ll feed it to you off of my cock. And then the next time after that maybe I’ll finally come inside that gorgeous mouth of yours.”

Sherlock groans loudly at the thought of that and John can’t take it anymore, he pulls his fingers out of Sherlock’s mouth and bends down to kiss him. Sherlock opens up to John immediately and the man can taste himself as he licks Sherlock’s lips, dips his tongue into Sherlock’s mouth. The combined taste of them together is exquisite.

“God, I bet that would feel so good,” John pants as he drags himself away from Sherlock’s irresistible lips. Sherlock is still hard and John won’t leave him wanting. “To have your tongue licking me, your wet mouth warm around me when I come. I bet I’d be able to feel your throat moving while you swallowed me. Fuck, it would be amazing, I just know it. You want to do that for me, don’t you? Because you want to be a good boy for me; you want to make me happy.”

Sherlock opens his mouth as if to answer John but no words come out. Instead, he nods his head vigorously, stroking himself faster and faster. As he gets closer to coming, John can’t help but reach out with his soiled hand once more, rubbing the tip of his finger along Sherlock’s full bottom lip and smearing what is left of his come across the red, plump skin, making it shine with wetness. Sherlock’s tongue immediately darts out to lick it up, and his eyes slam shut as his orgasm rips through his body, tearing a whimper from his throat.

Once Sherlock is finished coming, John immediately dives back down to kiss him. After Sherlock climaxes is John’s favourite time to kiss him, when he is unresponsive and gasping against John’s mouth. His pale body goes soft and pliant, utterly limp and sated, and John loves the fact that he is the one who does that to Sherlock. He is the only one who has ever made Sherlock lose himself so completely this way.

When Sherlock comes back to himself, he returns John’s kisses enthusiastically, as if in gratitude for two amazing orgasms, and they snog on Sherlock’s bed like teenagers (well, at least in John’s case) for a long while, simply delighting in the taste and feel of one another. When John’s arms feel like they can’t hold him up any longer, he stretches out on his side next to Sherlock and the two continue kissing, moving around one another while they get comfortable without once pulling apart.

After a long moment Sherlock finally pulls away from him slowly and John lets him go with no compunctions, completely at ease and happy. The man rolls onto his back with a happy grin on his face and tucks one arm behind his head, wrapping the other around Sherlock’s shoulders and pulling the boy towards his side. Neither one speaks and John sighs in contentment, enjoying the easy silence between them.

“John?” Sherlock breaks the stillness suddenly, and his voice is small in the quiet of his bedroom. “Do you…enjoy having sex with me?”

John doesn’t say anything right away, because he is sure that he must have heard wrong. He lets
his brain process Sherlock’s question for a second longer and comes to the disturbing conclusion that no, he hadn’t misheard. “Sherlock, what kind of question is that?” he asks, frowning, as he sits up to glare at the brunet. “Of course I enjoy having sex with you!”

Sherlock won’t meet his gaze, though. “Then why won’t you penetrate me?” he asks softly, a small blush dusting his pale face. “You’ve never even gotten close to acting like you want to.”

John sighs and runs his clean hand through his messy hair, licking his lips. “I’ve told you before, I’m not going to rush you,” he explains patiently. He understands that Sherlock is young and impatient and self-conscious, but John won’t push him into doing something so drastic if he thinks Sherlock isn’t completely ready. And John knows that he has to take it upon himself to know whether Sherlock is ready or not; if it were up to Sherlock, John is certain that they would have done it after their first kiss or something equally ridiculous. Sherlock has no sense of self-preservation or control. He is so much like a child in that respect, still. “I want you to be comfortable and feel ready when we finally do it. I’d wait forever for you.”

Sherlock stares at him as John’s words sink in and the worry lines that are creasing his brow ease slightly. “But everything else is…adequate?” he asks slowly.

“Oh, darling,” John says with a tiny chuckle. He reaches out to pull Sherlock towards him, hugging him close. “When I’m with you, it’s the best sex I’ve ever had.”

“Don’t patronise me, John,” Sherlock mumbles into John’s shirt as his face presses against the man’s chest, and John can almost hear the scowl.

“No, I mean it!” John says quickly. “Even if we don’t have penetrative sex, when I’m with you it still feels a hundred times better than with anyone else I’ve ever been with. Because you and I, we have a connection. I’ve never loved anyone the way that I love you. I could drown in you,” John tells him, dragging Sherlock back down to the bed and rolling on top of him, leaning down to kiss Sherlock’s lips softly, tenderly. “I do drown in you. And when we’re together, I feel closer to you than I ever have with anyone else. I feel like I live right here.” He brings a hand in between their chests and touches the spot over Sherlock’s heart. “And I know that you’ll let me stay there forever. I want to. Stay there forever,” he clarifies, because he worries that he’s babbling again and that Sherlock won’t understand him. “Will you let me?”

Sherlock stares at him in wide-eyed amazement and then nods, lifting up his head for a kiss. John obliges him.

“But even if we didn’t have that connection,” John says after he pulls away from the soft lips, “you are by far the sexiest person I’ve ever slept with. The most gorgeous. Definitely the most intelligent. You know exactly how to touch me to drive me wild and your mouth—my god, that mouth,” John whispers, at a loss for words that can accurately describe exactly how Sherlock makes him feel, exactly what John sees when he looks at him. “It’s sinful. Perfect. If you ever decide to leave me, I would wank the rest of my life to thoughts about you and the things you’ve done to me, the things you’ve let me do to you. I’ve never come so hard in my life as I have since I’ve been with you.”

At that, Sherlock finally smiles up at John and it is that happy, bright smile that John knows is only reserved for him to see. It lights up Sherlock’s whole face and makes him look younger, more innocent. He lifts his head once more to steal a kiss from John and then wiggles out from under him, making his way off the bed and towards his bathroom with a shy grin and a small “Love you,” thrown John’s way. It is the first time that the youth has said it to John since the night that he first told the older man, and it seems almost as if it is given as a sort of apology for the earlier
conversation. John silently boggles at the gesture, too stunned to say it back. But Sherlock either
doesn’t seem to mind or doesn’t notice.

When Sherlock is no longer in sight, John sighs and turns over once again to lie on his back,
staring up at the ceiling and frowning.

John knows Sherlock’s confidence level isn’t actually as high as he tries to portray it to be. He is
exceedingly insecure, heart-achingly scared, and always worried that he isn’t good enough or that
he has done something wrong again. It is tragic to see such a beautiful, intelligent, completely
independent person with such low self-esteem. It breaks John’s heart to know that something,
somewhere along the line in Sherlock’s life, beat down the boy’s spirit so completely. John finds
himself wondering what it was; which emotional trauma was the one that finally broke Sherlock
Holmes?

Was it being abandoned by his mother at such a young age? Was it growing up with an abusive,
alcoholic father for the majority of his childhood? Was it the simple fact that he was so different
from other kids his age, and there was no one in his life to tell him that it was okay to be different,
that he wasn’t a freak or a psychopath? Or was it being left to suffer alone through his hellish life
by the only family member who could have possibly helped him?

Any one of those things by themselves, John knows, would be enough to hurt a lesser person than
Sherlock. When all of them are combined, though, John can’t believe that Sherlock even knows
how to love anymore, and he feels lucky that he is the one that Sherlock is giving the last little
unbroken piece of his heart to.

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“What?” John pants out, because blood flow hasn’t returned to his brain yet and he can’t
concentrate on what Sherlock has just said.

“I’m hard again,” Sherlock explains, as if he’s talking to an idiot. He grinds his length into John’s
stomach as if to prove his point. “Let’s go one more time.”

“Fucking hell, Sherlock!” John shouts out, and for a moment he is scared—
actually scared—for
his health, because he knows that once Sherlock has an idea in his head, there’s no deterring him.
“I’m not as young as I used to be, you know. I can’t just get it up again right afterwards,” he points
out, and hopes like hell that Sherlock will listen to him.

“But, John,” Sherlock whines as he grinds down harder into John’s body. “I’m still horny.” He
bends over the blond and peppers John’s face with kisses, as if that alone will convince him.

“Sherlock, can I have one bloody minute to recuperate?” John pleads in exasperation, bringing his
hands up to push at Sherlock’s shoulders as he tries to move the other body away from him. “I’ve
barely caught my breath; if I try to go again I may end up passing out!”

Sherlock, however, simply leans all of his weight into John’s chest, and John can’t budge him.
“That’s okay,” he says as he licks a trail up the side of John’s neck. “I don’t need you to be
conscious; I just need you to be hard.”


Sherlock continues kissing him and wriggling all over him, trying to grind down against him some
Sherlock, however, must have missed the lecture John gave his classes about the intricacies of human physiology in relation to sexual reproduction, because the kid doesn’t let up. He continues to rut against John’s leg like a dog in heat and the man simply lies there limply, trying not to grow frustrated with him. “Sherlock, I can’t, honestly. I’m so tired. I think you broke me.”

Above him, Sherlock finally stills his movements and huffs in disappointment. He throws himself off of John suddenly, flopping down on his back heavily beside the man. “Fine,” he sighs, petulant, and John can’t help but chuckle at the boy’s antics.

God, how John loves him.

“It’s not the end of the world, you know,” John assures him conversationally. “You won’t die from not getting off one more time.”

“That’s easy for you to say,” Sherlock answers with a huffy roll of his eyes. “All you need is one orgasm before you’re practically falling asleep on top of me.”

“Oi! Feelings,” he reminds Sherlock, pointing to his chest, but Sherlock simply laughs and reaches in between their bodies to grab at John’s hand and bring it up to his mouth, kissing John’s knuckles by way of apology.

“It’s fine. I know you’re old and you can’t help it.”

“Git,” John growls at him, but he smiles reluctantly, too, not really mad. He knows Sherlock is teasing.

Sherlock makes sure to kiss each one of John’s knuckles before flipping his hand over to place a kiss on the centre of his palm. John watches him silently, amazed that he was ever lucky enough to find the boy, and Sherlock uses both of his hands to spread John’s palm open, blunt fingers splayed apart so that Sherlock can see the appendage completely.

Piercing blue-green eyes stare at it for a short time before Sherlock asks, “Why don’t you take it off when we’re together?”

For a second John thinks that Sherlock is asking about the fact that John still always keeps his shirt on when they are in bed together. As John keeps watching him, though, he sees that Sherlock is staring rather intently at his wedding ring, a small frown pinching his features together.

John doesn’t really know how to answer that question. He has never thought much about his wedding ring. Actually, he forgets it’s there most of the time. It is dirty and in desperate need of a cleaning, and it cuts into the skin of his finger slightly from a decade of greasy takeaways and a depressing, sedentary life since his discharge. He never removes it, unlike Mary who he knows takes hers off when she is washing dishes after dinner or taking a shower or putting on lotion. It went on his finger ten years ago and it has never once crossed his mind to take it off, even with his marriage falling apart around him. But when he is with Sherlock, his wife and his wedding ring and his marriage are all the furthest things from his mind. He has never once thought to wonder if Sherlock has ever noticed his ring or how Sherlock has felt about it. It is stupid of him, he knows now; Sherlock notices everything, of course.

“Do you want me to take it off when I’m with you?” John asks, and something churns inside of his
stomach. Something that feels strangely like guilt. He finds that he isn’t really sure how he wants Sherlock to answer. He doesn’t exactly know what it is that he wants. John wants Sherlock to know that he is serious about their relationship, that this isn’t just a bit of fun for him, but there is also some part of John that fears taking off his wedding ring; the thought of removing it when he is with Sherlock and then putting it back on when he leaves makes him feel dirty and ashamed.

“I hate feeling it against my skin when you touch me,” Sherlock says, and he sounds sad, tiny. “I hate seeing it out of the corner of my eye when you stroke my face.”

God. John didn’t know that hurting someone you love could hurt yourself so badly. He feels a sharp stab of agony when he looks at Sherlock’s face, and there is a guilt that is dark and suffocating when he thinks that he has made Sherlock suffer through this for so long without realising that it was making him uncomfortable.

“Sherlock, I…I’m sorry,” he whispers. He wants to reach out and pull Sherlock to him, hold him, never let him go, but he thinks that Sherlock would be completely justified in never wanting John to touch him again. John feels like he has just lost the right to put his hands on this beautiful boy. “I never thought…I’ll take it off, if it will make you feel better,” he states with a sudden fierce conviction. “Whenever I’m with you—I’ll take it off every time.” Any shame or remorse that he had thought he might feel by discarding his wedding ring while he is cheating on his wife is quickly pushed aside. He’ll gladly take all of the guilt in the world if it means that Sherlock won’t have to feel repulsed with himself ever again.

However, Sherlock simply shakes his head, giving John a wry smile that holds no humour and no warmth. “It’s not going to matter. You’ll still go home to her at the end of the day,” he says, and the words cut John deep, hurt in a desperate kind of way. “And sooner or later you’ll forget to put it back on, or it will fall out of your trouser pocket in your rush to undress and you’ll lose it. We can’t have that, now can we? What would your wife say?”

John ignores Sherlock’s sardonic, biting tone. He doesn’t blame Sherlock for being derisive about the whole thing; he is just a child who hasn’t been able to grasp the depth and complexity of adult relationships and emotions, after all. “I love you, Sherlock,” John feels the very urgent need to clarify. He wants to explain to Sherlock that even though John hasn’t left his wife yet, it doesn’t change the way that John feels about him. Not one bit. “You. Just because I still wear this ring doesn’t mean I care about you any less than her.”

“Well it certainly doesn’t mean you care about me any more, either,” Sherlock snaps back, letting his anger show through for the first time since they started having this conversation.

“What is that supposed to mean?” John asks, shaking his head in confusion because he feels like Sherlock is purposefully talking in riddles, trying to confound him with words. Even though he’ll never admit it out loud, Sherlock is so much keener, so much more intuitive than John can ever hope to be. John feels like there is more to Sherlock’s words, something deeper that they should be talking about, a bigger problem that needs to be addressed. But John is an idiot and a coward, and Sherlock doesn’t know how to properly talk about his feelings.

Instead of answering him, Sherlock simply sighs and shakes his head slightly, dark curls sweeping in front of his bright eyes. “Never mind,” he says dismissively. “Forget I said anything.”

John doesn’t want to, though. Can’t. “I love you,” he repeats. He’ll say it over and over again, as many times as he needs to for Sherlock to understand that John’s marriage has no bearing on his relationship with Sherlock. They are two entirely separate things. One an obligation, the other a blessing. “Totally and completely. You’re everything to me. And one day I’ll do something to show you just how much you mean to me, to make up for how much my staying with Mary hurts
He reaches out tentatively to grab Sherlock and pull him close, kissing the side of Sherlock’s smooth face and holding him tightly in apology for all of the stupid, hurtful things he has done in the past.

Sherlock allows himself to be pulled into John’s arms, relaxing into the embrace. “Make me a cup of tea, you prat,” Sherlock mumbles into John’s chest, his flippant tone clearly stating that he doesn’t want to talk about it anymore. “Show me how much you love me with caffeine and sugar.”

John smiles down at him, a sadness still pulling at the edge of his lips. He’ll do anything for Sherlock, though, and if Sherlock wants a cup of tea to make him feel better, then John will spend the rest of his life making him pot after pot with as much sugar as he can possibly heap in it, and bringing Sherlock steaming cups of the sweet drink along with biscuits in bed.

“Gladly,” he murmurs as he presses a kiss to Sherlock’s forehead, and then another to the tip of his nose as well, just for good measure. He gets up and straightens his shirt, bending down to the floor and finding his boxers and trousers to pull them on before making his way out of the bedroom and to Sherlock’s kitchen, thoughts racing through his mind the entire way.

John knows that his marriage hurts Sherlock, but, in all honesty, he has never really entertained the idea of leaving Mary. He’s never really let himself. It is scary to think about: giving up the life he knows, the life he has had for as long as he can remember—miserable though it may be—for something new.

If John is honest with himself, he doesn’t even really know what Sherlock wants from him in the long run. He knows that they are completely gone on each other, but John doesn’t know what Sherlock expects from their relationship. And he is afraid to ask. He is afraid to know the answer. When it comes down to it, Sherlock is just a teenager. One who is moody, and hormonal, and easily distracted. John doesn’t even know if Sherlock is capable of a long-term relationship.

John fills the kettle with water and stares at it while it heats, frowning deeply. In truth, he thinks that this delicate balance which they have built between them is the best for right now, while Sherlock is still in school. Even if John were to leave Mary, there is no guarantee that he and Sherlock wouldn’t end up getting careless and then being caught, or that Mary wouldn’t become suspicious of John finally granting her a divorce after years of denying her one, or that Sherlock wouldn’t wind up getting bored of John as the undercurrent of danger started to fall away once he divorced his wife and they got closer to the end of the school year.

No, John decides as the water in the kettle continues to heat. There are just too many variables right now. Too many things that can go wrong. It’s not the right time to think about leaving his wife. Dwelling on the idea will only hurt, so it is best if he just stops thinking about it.

As the kettle comes to a boil, John rummages around in Sherlock’s kitchen and finds two clean cups, some untainted sugar, and a box of unopened biscuits that he had brought with him the other day, which Sherlock had forgotten about. He makes Sherlock’s tea just the way he likes it and walks back to the bedroom, crawling into bed beside a silently waiting Sherlock after carefully placing the cups on the bedside table.

In bed, John holds Sherlock close for a moment, wrapping him in the safe warmth of his arms, and wants to tell him all of the thoughts that are racing through his mind. He wants to explain it all and tell Sherlock that he is sorry, but he can’t seem to get the words out. Instead, he drops kisses onto the top of Sherlock’s head that end up getting lost in his tangle of hair and says nothing.
But it’s okay, because Sherlock lies quietly in his arms and holds him back, and he seems to hear everything that John is unable to say.

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Notes: In this chapter, there is a line that states:

“He doesn’t blame Sherlock for being derisive about the whole thing; he is just a child who hasn’t been able to grasp the depth and complexity of adult relationships and emotions, after all”

when John and Sherlock are talking about John’s wedding ring. I would just like to take this opportunity to say that since this story is in John’s POV, there are a lot of thoughts that John has that are being twisted in his own mind to justify his actions to himself, this being one of them. I’m sure there are others here and there, but this one in particular made me feel especially icky when writing it, like I was trying to justify cheating for myself, so I just thought I would apologize for it once again.
“Guess what Dr. Patel told me today,” Mary says amicably over their evening meal one night, breaking the awkward silence that has become an honourary guest at their dinner table during the past several months.

“What’s that?” John asks, his attention on his food. He wonders if Sherlock is eating dinner at this time, too. Probably not. John doesn’t think he has ever seen the kid eat so much as a biscuit that hasn’t been forced on him by the doctor, let alone a whole meal.

Mary clears her throat in a nervous sort of manner and tries to sound aloof. “There is a medical conference in Cardiff two weekends from now and she says that she wants to take me along with her.” Mary’s fork makes a shrill scraping noise as she drags it across the bottom of her plate.

John looks up at her for the first time since he sat down to have dinner with her. She is subtly avoiding his glance and paying too much attention to her food, but other than that she looks perfectly composed. If John wasn’t so used to being lied to for the majority of their relationship, he might not even notice something is amiss.

But he does.

He knows it isn’t really a medical conference that she is going to. He has always been able to tell when she is lying to him, and he knows that she’s lying now; it’s obvious (as Sherlock would put it). Normally at this moment in their conversation he would accuse her of lying and cheating and start an epic row. Now, though, he finds himself actually trying to contain a happy smile as she lies through her teeth about how busy they are going to be at the conference, so if he rings her she probably won’t be able to answer.

John doesn’t care, though. All that his mind focuses on is the fact that if she is gone for an entire weekend, it means that he can have Sherlock over for two whole days. He can sleep with Sherlock at night after they fool around and he won’t have to worry about Sherlock having to sneak off before the morning. John can take the teen in his own bed for once; his own bed which is bigger, more comfortable, and probably more sanitary than the one that they have been using in Sherlock’s room all this time. He can take his time with Sherlock, and lie with him for hours afterwards, basking in the post-coital glow of their lovemaking.
A million ideas and a million scenarios play themselves out in John’s head until he finally lands on one, so glaringly obvious that he feels like an idiot for not thinking of it right off the bat.

They can finally have sex. Actual, penetrative sex. It is the perfect time, the way that John had imagined he would eventually take Sherlock. Slow, drawn out, without the fear of being caught by Sherlock’s drunk father stumbling home. John can take his time prepping Sherlock; he can take all night if he wants to. And afterwards, John won’t have to leave and Sherlock won’t have to sneak out of a window.

It is perfect. Absolutely perfect.

*  

When John comes out of Sherlock’s bathroom the next day, cleaned and presentable once more, it is to a dressing-gown clad Sherlock sitting at the microscope on his desk, talking to the empty room.

“—But the atomic weight of nitrogen can’t possibly account for the difference in results. It just doesn’t make any sense.”

“Er, Sherlock?” John says, looking around the room in case he missed something and there was someone else there. It is extremely unlikely, but one never knows with Sherlock Holmes. “Who are you talking to?”

Sherlock throws him a glare from over the eyepiece of his microscope. “You, of course.”

“But,” John says confusedly, “I wasn’t even in the room.”

“Oh, were you not?” Sherlock asks, unconcerned, his attention going back to whatever he is looking at through his microscope lens. “I hadn’t noticed.”

John doesn’t know if he wants to laugh or frown at that, so he settles for just sitting on the edge of Sherlock’s bed, watching the younger male. Sherlock hadn’t put on any clothes after they had fooled around earlier, just picked up his dressing gown from the floor and threw it on. The material is thin and silky-looking, clinging to Sherlock’s body as he sits at his desk, doing nothing to hide the bulges and curves of his form.

“Do you do that often?” John asks, mostly as a way to distract himself. There’s no point in getting worked up when he knows he won’t be able to do anything about it. All it will do is set Sherlock off again, and he isn’t willing to go through that just because he wants to do a bit of post-sex snogging and heavy petting.

Sherlock shrugs, oblivious to John’s thoughts. “I guess. I haven’t really noticed. I usually just talk to the skull when you aren’t here.”

John does frown at that. He doesn’t quite like the feeling of coming in second to an inanimate piece of anatomy. “So why are you talking to me now?” he asks, more than a little petulantly.

Sherlock doesn’t notice, though. “I seem to have misplaced the skull once again,” he explains. He looks away from the microscope and down to a notebook that has been laid out on the desk beside him, jotting down a few quick notes in his jagged, spidery handwriting.

John can’t help but smile at that. Sometimes the boy is just too adorable for his own good. “I’m just filling in for your skull, then, am I?” he asks.
“Relax,” Sherlock says, throwing him an affectionate smile before he turns back to his microscope. “You’re doing fine.”

John rolls his eyes and gets up to walk around Sherlock’s room, poking into corners that he has never bothered to look at before. He knows he will have to go home soon, but it feels so nice to just be here with Sherlock. Comfortable. He likes watching the teen while he is wrapped up in an experiment or pouring over a book, searching for something.

“John,” Sherlock says suddenly, just as the older man is prodding at some sort of fungus experiment that Sherlock has set by his window. “I need you to find last year’s May edition of Pathology Today and open it up. There’s an article in it about nitrogen, I need you to find it.”

“All right,” John responds, going over to Sherlock’s bookcase and trying to remember how the brunet has all of his reading material catalogued. But he gives up halfway through and just begins reading the spines of everything one by one. He comes across the journal that Sherlock wants by chance and opens it up, flipping through its pages.

“Are you doing it?” Sherlock asks him from across the room, sounding impatient.

“Yeah,” John says, skimming the table of contents for the article that Sherlock wants.

“Have you done it?” Sherlock asks, irritated now at the speed at which John is searching.

“Yea—hang on!” John yells, exasperated. He finds the page number that the article is on and flips to it roughly, annoyed. “Christ, are you this demanding with the skull, as well?”

“Don’t be ridiculous,” Sherlock says, holding out his hand for the magazine that John is gripping tightly in his irritation. “The skull doesn’t annoy me half as much as you do.”

John doesn’t know how Sherlock does that—how he turns a nice, comfortable moment into something that grates on John’s nerves, yet still makes the man feel a deep sense of affection for him, aggravating as he is. It’s one of the many mysteries of Sherlock Holmes, and John can’t help but love him for it.

He hands the man-child his magazine and Sherlock takes it silently, already ignoring John once more. He suddenly thinks that now would be as good a time as any to tell Sherlock about Mary’s upcoming trip, so he walks the rest of the way up to Sherlock’s desk, sitting on the edge of it and looking down at the teen in the chair.

“I have some news that I think you might find interesting,” he says casually, crossing his arms over his chest and smiling fondly at Sherlock.

That catches Sherlock’s attention the way John knew it would. Sherlock can never pass up anything interesting. He looks up from his microscope and towards John, heterochromia eyes a striking mix of colours in the bright light from the lamp that Sherlock has on his desk. “Is that so?” he asks, tossing his head to the side to get a piece of his fringe out of the way. “Another haircut soon, but John rather likes the length of the unruly curls as they are. They are perfect for running his fingers through.

“Yeah,” John responds with a soft smile, reaching out to push the stray curl that is annoying Sherlock off of his forehead. “Well,” he says, pulling a face suddenly and retracting his hand, “on second thought, maybe not. Might just be ‘boring’ to you.” He stands from his perch on Sherlock’s desk and walks across the room, grabbing up his wallet and keys and making to leave. He knows that Sherlock won’t let him go, though, and he hides his smile as he walks away from
his student.

“Wait!” Sherlock says, microscope and experiment suddenly forgotten. He is looking after John with undivided attention now, and the older man really shouldn’t enjoy that as much as he does. “What is it?”

“Never mind,” John says with a shake of his head, being sure to wipe the smile from his face as he turns back to Sherlock. “Forget I said anything.”

“John!” the boy cries out, abandoning his experiment completely now and standing up, walking away from the desk and towards the man, who is standing by the bedroom door. Sherlock’s blue silk dressing gown shimmers as he moves, and John licks his lips as he watches Sherlock come closer. “You can’t tell me that you have news and then decide against saying anything more!” Sherlock tells him. “That’s cruel.”

This time John can’t help the smile that pulls at his lips as he sees a small pout come across Sherlock’s face. “Is it, now?” he asks as Sherlock finally reaches him and wraps his arms around John. John returns the hug, rubbing his hands across the cool, smooth silk covering Sherlock’s back, letting his fingers wander lower and lower until he is grabbing two handfuls of the teen’s arse. He kisses Sherlock softly and rubs himself against Sherlock’s silk-clad crotch, using his thigh to drag the material over Sherlock’s soft prick.

“Torture,” Sherlock moans against John’s mouth as he thrusts against the man’s attentions. John chuckles and caves; he had no intention of keeping this from Sherlock anyways, he just wanted the teen’s full attention when he told him. “Okay, okay, don’t bite my arm off. Mary is going out of town week after next,” he mumbles against Sherlock’s skin, dragging his lips away from Sherlock’s so that he can trail kisses down the long, pale throat. Sherlock arches into his mouth. “For the entire weekend. I thought that maybe you could—that we might,” he stops littering Sherlock’s neck with kisses and brings his face back up to Sherlock’s. The brunet is looking at him expectantly, and John has a sudden burst of nervous butterflies in his stomach that he tries to distract himself from by kissing Sherlock’s mouth once again.

“Sherlock, will you stay with me?” he asks against his lover’s lips, face heating up with the beginnings of a blush. He knows that it’s ridiculous to feel this way—nervous, like some bumbling teenager who is trying to get their first shag—but he can’t help it. Sherlock turns everything upside down in John’s mind. He always has.

“John,” Sherlock breathes out, their lips still touching. John can feel Sherlock’s mouth twist into a smile against his own and John lets out a tiny sigh of relief that he hadn’t known he had been holding in. “Yes,” Sherlock says, kissing him. “Yes, of course I will.”

John hugs Sherlock tighter, giddy at his answer. He kisses Sherlock until he doesn’t have any air left in his lungs to breathe and then pulls away reluctantly. “Good,” he says with a huge grin and another quick peck to Sherlock’s lips. “Great. And I, er, thought that we might be able to—that is, uh, I figured we could finally…have sex. Proper sex,” he finishes in a mumble, a ferocious blush heating his cheeks.

“Oh,” Sherlock breathes, eyes going wide in surprise. He pulls away from John at that, far enough that he can look at the man’s face. John lets him go, trying not to blush even more at Sherlock’s scrutiny. He can see the boy doing that thing again—that thing where he reads John’s body and emotions like a book, where he finds answers in the silence of the other man and susses out John’s secret desires, hidden intentions.
But John doesn’t have any of those left. He has laid everything out for Sherlock, not held anything back. John has waited so long for this opportunity, and he knows that Sherlock has, too. Sherlock wants this just as badly as he does, if not more. John is certain of that.

A wicked smile starts to spread over Sherlock’s face at what he sees written on John’s body, coming to brilliant conclusions just like he always does. He comes back in for another kiss and John gladly obliges him, his heart stuttering happily at the thought that he will finally have Sherlock completely. Soon.

After a while, Sherlock pulls away from him, and John is reluctant to let him go. His hands continue to wander across Sherlock’s silk-clad body, revelling in the feel of him, and Sherlock laughs happily. “I hope you have the energy for an entire weekend with me, old man. Because I’m not going to go easy on you.” He gives John a sinful look, full of hunger and promise. “I’ve been waiting for you to fuck me for so long that I’m not going to let you stop for two whole days, John. Think you can keep up?” Sherlock asks, his grin deadly-sharp at the edges.

It is then that John thinks he may end up needing a little help to save himself from Sherlock’s insatiable libido.

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“Mike, I need you to do me a favour,” John says as soon as he sits next to the other man at the bar of the pub he has asked Stamford to meet him in, not even bothering to say hi. They’ve been friends for far too long to go through unnecessary “hello’s” and “how are you’s”. They also have known each other for so long that John hadn’t thought twice about asking Stamford for his help with this particular problem. “I’m going to write out a prescription to you for Viagra. I need you to get it filled and give it to me.”

Mike doesn’t seem perturbed by John’s blunt greeting, but as soon as John tells the man what he wants Mike to do for him, his friend’s greying eyebrows shoot up his forehead. “John, isn’t that —?” he begins, and John knows exactly what it is that Mike is going to say.

“Yeah, I know it’s illegal,” John says, motioning for the bartender to bring him one of whatever Mike is drinking. He doesn’t even really care what it is; he knows he’ll need the liquid courage for this conversation. “If I were back in London, I would just get a colleague to write it up for me, but I can’t do that here.”

“Why don’t you just go to a doctor here?” Mike asks him, looking confused.

At that John has to fight down a blush. The bartender chooses that moment to bring him his pint and he quickly takes a drink, hiding behind the thick glass. “I, er…I don’t want anyone to know I have it,” he mumbles into his pint. “Mary is a nurse, so whenever I get sick she always looks in my chart. If I get someone to prescribe it to me it will be noted in my medical history. I, er…” He clears his throat and takes a deep breath, hoping for the best out of this conversation as he tells Mike, “I don’t want her to know that I’m taking it.”

“You’re not that old, John. I’m surprised you would need it,” Mike argues, still not catching on. “Also—if you don’t mind me saying so—I’m surprised that you’re having sex with Mary constantly enough to use it. I thought you guys weren’t…” he pauses and makes an awkward motion with his hand that John isn’t sure he knows the meaning of. “You know,” Mike finishes uncomfortably, making a face.

John licks his lips and fights back an annoyed sigh. He had been hoping that he wouldn’t have to come right out and say it—that he wouldn’t have to admit to cheating on his wife—but it seems
that Mike isn’t as keen as John had originally hoped he would be. “It’s, er…it’s not for her.” He mumbles the words and fights down a blush that he tells himself is not from shame. It’s really not.

Mike looks at him blankly for a moment, mouth agape. The dark light of the pub throws shadows across his brown hair, greying at the temples, making it look darker for the moment. John is suddenly reminded of the man that he knew back at university and all of the years that Mike has stuck through their friendship. He’s a good mate, and having Mike look at him the way that he is hurts John. It makes him feel guilty, like he’s doing something horribly wrong.

“Oh, John,” Mike says, his voice dropping low and his face crumbling into a look of sorrow. He shakes his head, as if he is trying to un-hear the words that John has just spoken. “No,” he denies, not wanting to believe it. “Come on, mate, you’re better than that! I never thought you would cheat—not after you know how much it hurts.”

John winces because he can’t help himself. Mike is right—of course Mike is right. He can’t stand seeing the look that his friend is giving him any longer so he stares down at his half-full pint, blunt fingers playing with the glass handle.

John has never really stopped to think too long on the fact that he is cheating on Mary. It is just something that simply doesn’t cross his mind when he is with Sherlock, happy and carefree. Sherlock fills up John’s heart and his mind and his life in such a way that John forgets completely that what he and his student are doing is highly inappropriate and immoral. When John is with Sherlock, he sees the world for what it could be, not what it is, and it feels more like he is cheating on Sherlock with his wife than the other way around.

He frowns down at his pint and licks his lips, turning to his friend with nerves steeled and convictions ready. He won’t be made to feel guilty about being with Sherlock. He can’t, not when he knows in his heart that it is right.

“I know,” he agrees with his friend, “but this isn’t just some one-off. I would never do something like that. This is,” he pauses, searching for the right word, but can’t find one good enough. “Different,” he settles for. “Real. It’s so much better than what I’ve ever had with Mary. I didn’t go into this lightly. I understand what I’ve done, and believe me, I don’t feel good about hurting Mary this way. But,” John sighs and runs a hand through his messy short hair, letting a small smile creep onto his face. “I’m happy. I never thought I could be this happy again.”

He feels his smile grow to epic proportions of its own volition; just the thought of what he has with Sherlock is enough to lighten his heart. “I feel alive again,” he explains, and he can hear a hint of wonder in his own voice, lost as it may become in the noise of the pub around them. “I feel like my old self. Like the person I was before I got shot and before my career ended.”

For a second Mike looks as though he may say something, but John knows what his friend is thinking and cuts him off. “I never thought I would ever end up doing something like this either, you know,” he admits, taking another drink of his beer. “But I also never thought I would find someone who could make me feel like this. Ever.” He can feel his grin turning soppy and he doesn’t even try to stop it. “It’s amazing. I just…I couldn’t help it, Mike,” he confesses, and the hint of wonder in his voice grows. “I knew it was wrong, but I was weak and I gave in. I don’t regret it, though. I can’t.”

“John, but Mary—” Mike starts, looking wounded.

“Mary has made her own decisions,” John states plainly, calmly. He can’t believe he is able to stay so reasonable about this whole conversation, but he is happy for it nonetheless. The last thing he needs right now is to have his convictions crumble around him. “I’m not saying that she
deserves me cheating on her because she cheated on me first—I’m not saying that at all. But I’ve tried, Mike. I’ve tried so hard to make it work with her.” He shakes his head and shrugs, a helpless little gesture of surrender. “She refuses to meet me halfway. She gave up on our marriage a long time ago. I know that. I was just too stubborn and scared to see it.”

In the seat next to him, Mike is still shaking his head, pint forgotten in his hand. “But I thought you still loved her,” he stresses, pushing his glasses up his face as he tries desperately to understand why John would do something like this.

John opens his mouth to respond to that and then realises that he doesn’t know what to say. Does he still love Mary? She is his wife, they have been together for most of their lives, they have known each other since they were young. No one knows him like Mary does, not even Mike. Not even Sherlock. He has been married to Mary for ten years, but they were childhood sweethearts long before that. They were each other’s first kiss; they lost their virginity to one another. There’s no one in this world who knows him so well; no one who knows first-hand what his turbulent relationship with his father was like, how he and his sister fell apart from one another in a slow, painful way after their mother died. Mary was the first person he told about wanting to join the Army, and they had made the decision that he would enlist together, as a couple. He had held her the night they lost their baby and cried with her, just as distraught and heartbroken as she had been. There is so much history, so much past, between them. A part of him will always love Mary, he is certain of that. But he is also certain that the love he has for Sherlock is so very different from the love he holds for Mary. And if he is being honest, he can say definitively that he has never loved Mary the way that he loves Sherlock—in this all-consuming, maddening, burning sort of way. Even when he was young and brash, foolish like only an adolescent man can be, he still had never thrown away all caution—all sanity—in his pursuit of Mary, the way he has done with Sherlock now.

No, he knows it isn’t the same kind of love at all. His feelings for the two of them couldn’t be more different. He loves Mary, he truly does. But he isn’t in love with Mary. Not anymore. All of his heart, all of his life, belongs to Sherlock now. Full stop.

“I thought I did, too,” John answers Mike softly, carefully. “But I guess I was just lying to myself, trying to make myself feel better about what I thought I was stuck with.” He shakes his head sadly. “But that wasn’t love, mate. I fell out of love with her a long time ago. I just didn’t want to admit it. I kept thinking that I could fix it, that I could make it better, that I could learn to love her again. But you can’t learn to love someone after they’ve done something like that to you. Not when they don’t want to learn to love you back.”

Mike says nothing when John stops talking; he doesn’t look like he can come up with an argument for John’s reasoning at all. John is glad because it is hard enough having to tell Mike all of this already—he doesn’t think he will be able to stand having to fight to defend his actions to his friend.

Mike seems to understand what John is talking about. He probably knows from experience what John means, but doesn’t want to say anything. So instead he just takes a drink from his pint and stares over the bar towards the back of the pub, not looking at John. “So you gonna divorce her, then?” he asks the empty space in front of him, and John can’t tell if he is upset or sad.

John opens his mouth to answer Mike but then pauses and frowns once again, because he honestly doesn’t know how to respond to that question either, and it twists his gut uncomfortably. This is twice now in the short span of a few days that he has had to think about his future with Mary, and with Sherlock. Before this, he hasn’t ever allowed himself to think about divorcing Mary to be with Sherlock, mostly because he doesn’t know if it is something that Sherlock wants. Oh, John
knows that Sherlock wants John to leave Mary, but whether or not Sherlock wants John to leave Mary for him is another matter. John may love the boy, and Sherlock may love him back, but John also knows that Sherlock is flighty and easily-distracted and in need of constant stimulation. Even though Sherlock has assured John that it won’t happen, John can’t help but think that one day Sherlock will wake up and decide that he is bored with him, and where will that leave John? Middle-aged and alone, with nothing and no one left in his life because he gave it all up for Sherlock. It is a scary thought, one that he isn’t sure he is ready to deal with quite yet. So he just simply shrugs instead. “Haven’t really thought about it much.”

“Really?” Mike asks, and he smiles at John for the first time since they met at the pub. “Cause it sounds like you’ve pretty much already made up your mind.” He laughs at John’s stunned look and thumps his friend on the back suddenly, causing John to spill some of his lager on the already-sticky bar top.

“Well, go on,” Mike presses him. The smile is still in place, easy and warm and letting John know that they are all right. “Tell me about her, then. She must be amazing, if she’s made good ol’ straight-laced John Watson stray. Is she younger?” he prods, and he seems immensely interested in spite of himself. “Is that why you need the prescription?”

John laughs at his friend’s sudden curiosity and blushes darkly. He had hoped that Mike would be okay with his decision eventually, but he hadn’t expected the man to want to gossip about John’s affair in such a manner. Still, John would be lying if he said that the blush wasn’t partly out of pride. “Yeah,” John responds with a pleased smile, happy for the sudden change of subject. “He’s younger. Er…much younger.”

Mike whistles and then laughs. “All right, mate! You’re living the dream!” It is a testament to the length of their friendship that Mike doesn’t comment on the fact that John is having sex with a bloke. Mike has known him since his first year at university, back when John was young and just beginning to find himself. Mike was there for John when Mary had initially decided that being with only one boy for the rest of her life wasn’t what she wanted, and she had broken up with John for the first time (one of many times that would come up over the years). Mike had stayed friends with John as the blond tried to sort himself out, experimenting with boys and girls and alcohol in the way that adolescents usually do. Mike has always known that John is bisexual, and had even made a comment once in passing, when John told the darker-haired man that he was going to propose to Mary, that he had always pictured John ending up with a bloke.

“So,” Mike says, jarring John from his memories and bringing him back to the present, to the dingy little pub the two are sitting in. “Who is he, then?”

“Oh, er…”

For the first time John doesn’t know what to say to his friend. He hasn’t really thought about what he would tell the man about Sherlock, mostly because he didn’t think that Stamford was going to want to know. He knows he can’t tell Mike that he is sleeping with one of his students—the man may be his best mate, but he knows that Mike won’t hesitate to turn him in to the authorities for taking advantage of a student. John may love Sherlock, but he still knows that what they are doing isn’t legal or acceptable in societal standards. “He’s—well, it’s…” he licks his lips and trails off, at a loss.

Beside him Mike simply purses his lips and narrows his eyes at John. “Is it best if I don’t know?” he asks lightly, as if it is inconsequential.

John sighs in relief at the out that his friend has provided for him. “Probably, yeah,” he tells Mike truthfully.
“All right, then,” Mike says and leaves it at that. John has never been more grateful.

“He’s amazing, though,” John tells his friend, that soppy smile coming back. “Simply amazing. He’s brilliant, the smartest person I’ve ever met. And gorgeous. So bloody gorgeous.” John shakes his head, still not believing his luck. “I can’t believe that someone like him ever even thought of giving me the time of day. And, God, he’s funny. He makes me laugh all the time. It’s been years since I’ve had so much fun with someone.” John’s grin grows wider just thinking about all of the ridiculous things that Sherlock does. “He gets me, you know? We have so much in common, and there’s always something to talk about. He’s completely mental, but in a good way. Drives me absolutely spare, but always makes up for it. He’s…perfect,” John trails off with a happy, content little sigh. “So perfect.”

When Mike doesn’t say anything for a moment, John looks over at his friend and sees that Mike is staring at him in stunned silence. John blushes when he realises what he must sound like to the other man; a love-sick fool.

“Wow,” Mike says with a low whistle and a wistful chuckle. “If you’re not careful, mate, it sounds like you’re gonna go arse over elbows for this one fast.”

John doesn’t tell Mike that his warning has come entirely too late.

“So you shag him yet?” Mike asks casually, taking an offhand drink of his lager.

John laughs, happy that he finally has someone who he can talk to Sherlock about, even if the person doesn’t know exactly who this mystery lover is. “Yeah. Well, almost,” he amends with a shrug. He feels so connected to Sherlock whenever they do anything sexual that he forgets sometimes that they haven’t actually had “sex”, in the true sense of the word. “We haven’t taken that last step yet. I’ve been waiting. I…want it to be special.” He can’t help the blush that heats up his skin when he realises that he sounds like a bloody girl.

Thankfully Mike doesn’t make mention of it. “Is that what the pills are for?” he asks instead.

John nods. “Mary’s going out of town the weekend after next, so I thought it would be the perfect time to…” he trails off because he can’t really bring himself to come right out and say that he is going to fuck Sherlock. Every time he thinks about it, he uses the term “making love”, but he’ll be damned if he is going to call it that in front of the other man.

“But he’s completely insatiable, Mike,” John continues hurriedly, covering up the awkward hitch in the conversation. “We haven’t even gone all the way and I can’t keep up with him.” He shakes his head and runs a hand through his hair, taking a drink of his beer. “I can’t remember being that age, but if I was half as horny as he is all the time it’s a wonder I was able to even graduate uni!”

Mike laughs at that, loud and booming in the small pub. “Yeah, I remember those days,” he says with more than a hint of nostalgia. “Good times. Miss ‘em.”

John shakes his head vigorously at that. “Believe me; at our age, fucking constantly isn’t all it’s cracked up to be,” he tells his friend honestly. “I think I’ve pulled more muscles than my first few days of military training back at Sandhurst.”

Mike laughs again, enjoying John’s sex-induced misery too much for the man’s own good. “So, you can still write up prescriptions, huh?” he asks shiftily, his smile growing decidedly evil at the edges. “Why don’t you write up that Viagra for a few months’ supply and you can split it with me. You know,” he says with an indifferent shrug, finishing off the last of his lager. “For my troubles and all.”
John sighs happily, feeling warm and content. Darkness surrounds him, and he can feel the heat of a body pressing up tightly against his side. He is comfortable. So comfortable. He can’t remember the last time that he slept in bed next to Mary and felt this happy. Beside him, the body shifts and rolls over, a bony knee jabbing him in the back.

_Bony knee,_ John thinks as he frowns slightly. That can’t be right; Mary never shoves her knees up into his kidneys like this. Only Sherlock does that.

His eyes shoot open suddenly, breaking the illusion of night-time. It is twilight, the fading sun shining weakly through the window of Sherlock’s room and setting everything aflame in a soft pink hue.

“Shit,” John mumbles as he tries to scramble out of Sherlock’s bed, but the boy grunts disapprovingly beside him and wraps a skinny arm tighter around John’s body, not allowing him up. He knows Sherlock didn’t fall asleep; Sherlock never falls asleep after they are done. If anything Sherlock was only in a light doze. Most likely, though, he was just lying awake in bed next to John, so the man doesn’t feel bad about jostling him around.

“Sherlock, I gotta go,” John tells him somewhat desperately, trying to remove the arm from around his chest. “I told you that Mary wanted me home for dinner, why’d you let me sleep?”

There is no answer from Sherlock as John finally manages to extricate himself from the teen’s grasp and jump out of bed, hurrying around the room as he gathers up all of his clothes, his shoes, and his jacket. He doesn’t even bother washing himself off before dressing; he doesn’t have enough time. Mary has been making suspicious-sounding remarks about his whereabouts lately, more short-tempered comments, and he knows that if he is late for dinner after promising her that he wouldn’t be, there will be an epic row waiting for him when he gets home. He doesn’t exactly want to deal with that right now. He shoves his feet into his brown dress shoes and doesn’t even bother tying the laces, then looks around for his keys.

As he searches the bedroom, his gaze roves over the lump of duvet on top of the mattress, and he notices a pair of bright eyes looking at him from between a mop of dark hair and the sheets.

“Have you seen my keys?” he asks Sherlock as the boy continues watching him silently while John searches through Sherlock’s things. “I thought they were in the pocket of my trousers, but they must have fallen out.”

Sherlock stays silent, but John doesn’t even notice. Not until Sherlock finally speaks and his words—instead of being helpful—are a sigh-inducing: “Why don’t you just stay?”

“Because I don’t want to stay, Sherlock,” he practically yells, frustrated and annoyed beyond reason now. He stops digging through a pile of Sherlock’s clothing on the floor and stands, turning to Sherlock, who is still lying in bed, with a glare. “I want to go home and have dinner with my wife so that I can get a good night’s sleep, and so that I won’t have to worry about rowing with her for hours over something as stupid as me being late to dinner because I was busy fucking you.”

As soon as the words are out of this mouth, John wishes like hell that he can take them back. He hears them as he speaks and cringes internally, cursing himself.

He hadn’t meant it to come out like that, he truly hadn’t. But he can see that Sherlock hears his words and jumps to his own conclusions. John means that he doesn’t want to stay because he doesn’t want to argue with Mary tonight, not when it could so easily be avoided by him just
Sherlock stares at him blankly, and that expressionless mask comes over his face once more. That look that John hates more than anything because it means that Sherlock is closed off to him now, shuttered away because John has hurt him and Sherlock is trying to protect himself from the man.

“Sherlock,” he begins, not sure what exactly he is going to say to make it better, but the brunet cuts him off, throwing the sheets off of himself and sitting up in his bed, body still bare from their earlier love-making. John can see streaks of dried, crusting semen on Sherlock’s stomach and thighs because Sherlock doesn’t like to clean off right away; he likes to feel John on him, likes to feel them mixed together.

“I’m lying here in my bed, naked and covered in your come,” Sherlock says to him lowly, dangerously. His eyes flash in anger and John can’t help licking his lips, a nervous compulsion when he knows something bad is about to happen. “Why don’t you tell me how you really feel about it, John?” he asks sarcastically, his words caustic and biting. “Why don’t you tell me where ‘fucking me’ falls on your list of priorities, below Mary and having dinner with your sodding wife?”

John heaves a frustrated sigh, not wanting to deal with this right now. It’s getting later and his text tone goes off in his pocket, a tiny warning. “Do you want to know how I feel? I feel like I’m tired of having this conversation with you, Sherlock,” he answers the boy’s question, rhetorical as it may have been. John turns away from him and continues his search for his keys, digging through a pile of books that sit of the floor now, wondering where in the bloody hell they could have possibly gotten to. He had them in his trousers earlier when Sherlock had pulled them off of him, and he was sure that he saw Sherlock toss his clothing in this direction. “You know that I can’t stay, yet every time I leave you act like it’s something new.”

And suddenly he feels a hand on his shoulder, turning him around forcefully. He looks to see Sherlock, out of bed and beside him now, a pair of sleep pants pulled haphazardly up around his hips. The teen is glaring at him, a thunderous scowl on his face, and he gives John’s shoulder a threatening push, shoving John back a step with the force of it.

“No, I act like I don’t want to be your dirty little secret anymore, that little bad habit that you hide from people,” he spits out at John, advancing on the man as John takes another step back, away from him. “I act like I’m tired of being your whore.”

“Sherlock!” he shouts, surprised that the brunet could possibly think that way. “You’re not—you’ve never been”— he doesn’t even know what to say to that.

But Sherlock takes his stuttering to mean that John just doesn’t have an answer to his accusation.

“See? You can’t even tell me that I’m wrong,” he says, pushing John back again, taking another menacing step towards him. “Tell me, John. Tell me what you’ve given up for me. Tell me what you’ve given up to be with me.”

John opens his mouth, not at all sure what he is going to say in response to Sherlock’s questions, but the teen interrupts him before he even has the chance to speak.

“Nothing!” Sherlock yells out, and his face is flushed red with anger, his eyes cold and hard. “You still have your wife,” he shouts and pushes at John’s shoulder again, forcing him to take another step backwards, “and you still have your marriage,” another push, “and you still have the kind of life that you had before me.” John’s back finally hits a wall and he has nowhere left to go, but Sherlock continues to advance on him. “So why are you wasting your time with this?” Sherlock
“Why are you wasting both of our times?”

“I—” he tries to think of something to say, something to rectify the situation, but he is shocked by Sherlock’s sudden anger, by Sherlock’s hateful words, and by these accusations that seem to be coming out of nowhere. “No, it’s not like that!”

Sherlock just scoffs at that, the sound ugly and hurtful. “It’s not?” he repeats, mockingly. “Because it certainly feels like it is. It feels like you come to me for a shag and a good time, and then you’re off again.” He lifts his head to look John straight in the face. “Isn’t that the way people treat whores?”

“Sherlock, I love you!” John shouts, stunned at what he is hearing. “I don’t think of you as—” he falters, can’t even say the word in regards to Sherlock, can’t think of him as being anything even remotely comparative to that term. “As that,” is all John can get out. “Not at all.”

Sherlock doesn’t say anything else for a moment and John thinks, prays, that the teen has believed him finally, has listened to what John is telling him.

“You say that a lot,” Sherlock says, and his tone is cautious. “That you love me. But sometimes I just don’t know whether or not to believe you.” He shakes his head and John’s heart stutters in his chest. “I know you think about me constantly. I know you think that you can’t live without me. I know you think that I’m exactly what you’ve been waiting for all of your life, the one thing that can make everything better for you. You think all of this, and you say that you love me, but you still leave me.” His voice trembles as he speaks, and John feels his heart breaking apart in his chest. “Every time, you leave me, just like you promised me you wouldn’t. You always leave me,” Sherlock continues in a shaky whisper, biting his lip and frowning as if there is something he wants to say, something painful that just doesn’t want to come out…

“And I just don’t know if I can take that anymore.”

John’s stomach drops to his feet, his breath stills in his lungs, and his heart comes to a complete stop.

He can’t have heard that right.

He can’t have.

“W-wha—” he tries to get the word out, but it sticks to his throat, won’t budge, chokes him. He licks his lips and tries again. “What are you saying?”

Instead of answering his question, Sherlock looks away from him, his head dropping and his gaze leaving John’s, as if he is suddenly ashamed. “You don’t know how hard I’ve fought to survive this life,” he says, but he is speaking to the floor, not looking at John. “How I’ve fought to survive everyone leaving me, being abandoned by every person who has ever loved me.” He closes his eyes and winces at some distant memory, something John can’t see and probably can’t even imagine. “You have no idea what I’ve had to do, just to make it to one more day because there hasn’t been anyone here to take care of me.” And finally, finally, Sherlock looks back at him, eyes big and round and shining wetly. “Everything that I’ve done in my life,” Sherlock tells him with a shake of his dark head, “everything that I’ve needed to do to survive, to get another hit so that the pain and the noise in my head will just stop for one fucking second…nothing has made me feel as dirty as you make me feel every time you leave me alone, every time you go back to your wife.”

John stares at Sherlock, at a loss. There are no words. John can think of nothing that he can say that would make this moment better, nothing that would make Sherlock’s pain go away.
“Sherlock,” John says brokenly, pleadingly. “I…” but he trails off, looking at Sherlock standing in front of him. He wants to say that he is sorry. He wants to get down on his knees and beg and plead for Sherlock not to leave him. But he hurts Sherlock. He hurts Sherlock constantly. And his desire to never hurt Sherlock again far exceeds his desire to keep Sherlock with him.

They stare at each other in an empty silence, neither knowing what to say, how to make this better. While John looks at Sherlock, he notices with surprise that Sherlock’s eyes are colourless now. A clear, bright sheen that isn’t green and isn’t blue and isn’t grey. His mind tells him that it’s not possible, all eyes have to be coloured, but John thinks and thinks and still cannot put a name to the shade of Sherlock’s eyes right now. Indescribable, indefinable, inexpressible.

John loves him so much.

“Mycroft is taking me to see universities this weekend,” Sherlock says suddenly, breaking the silence between them. His voice is soft and quiet and unsure. He sounds young. Young and hurt. “He’s picking me up Thursday and he has several days of visits planned.” He gives John a wry smile that holds no warmth and no mirth. The gesture twists his beautiful lips into something ugly and unfamiliar. “Now it’s my turn to tell you to fuck off and not to text me.”

Sherlock turns suddenly, bending down to the floor and digging through the clothes that he had been wearing earlier, the clothes that John had gently, lovingly, wonderingly taken off of him as they had kissed one another deeply, tenderly, just a few hours ago. When Sherlock straightens back up, it is with John’s missing keys in his hand and a stony look on his face. “I’ll text you when I get back to let you know if I’ve decided to keep doing…this. Maybe,” he rectifies with an uncaring shrug of his shoulders as he hands John his keys. “I may feel like I still don’t want to speak to you. Just leave me alone until then.”

And with that he turns and walks towards his bathroom, shutting the door and leaving John on the other side of it, alone. John hears the lock turn, a loud scraping noise in the stillness of Sherlock’s room, and it sounds like a gunshot going off straight into his heart.
John doesn’t have Sherlock’s class the next day, Wednesday, and he doesn’t try to go over to Sherlock’s house that afternoon, his mind still numb and dazed from everything that happened the day before. So when Sherlock leaves on Thursday morning, John doesn’t even get the chance to see him one last time.

He goes home Thursday night in a dark mood, but it isn’t anger that he feels. It’s despair. His heart aches from the crushing weight of it and his hands shake from the fear of it. At dinner time, he drinks most of his meal and pushes his food around his plate. The liquor feels heavy on an empty stomach and numbs everything quickly. He knows he will be drunk soon if he continues drinking like this without eating anything, but he just pokes at his food, not able to take a bite of it.

Mary eats, silently watching him with narrowed eyes, but he doesn’t care. He just doesn’t care about what she may think anymore. What does it matter—what does any of it matter—without Sherlock in his life?

He climbs the stairs wearily right after dinner, making his way to his bedroom. He glances at the clock on his bedside table, and sees that it reads 8 pm. He never goes to bed this early. Usually, right about now, he’s having a shower—washing off the evidence of being with Sherlock before his wife lies down next to him in bed, close enough to tell if something is off.

He doesn’t have to do that tonight.

He may not ever have to do that again.

Slowly he undresses, climbs under the duvet, and lies there for what feels like hours, sleep never coming to him. Mary comes in and gets ready for bed. She cautiously slips in between the sheets next to him, ignoring and avoiding John’s grief.

She is good at that. She’s been doing it for years.

Mary falls asleep quickly, nothing weighing down her conscious. John fidgets violently under the covers and punches at the duvet a few times when he still can’t get comfortable. He sighs, frustrated and angry that he can’t even find a release to his misery in sleep. Hopelessly, he turns to glance at the clock on his bedside table again, afraid of what it will show, but its little hands still read 8 pm, the face of it glowing in the darkness of his bedroom.

It’s not right, of course. John has been in bed for at least 2 hours, yet seeing the clock still read 8 releases something in his chest, something that has been squeezing tightly, trying to suffocate him,
and he can breathe just a little bit easier.

8 pm and Sherlock doesn’t ever text him at this hour, so John can pretend the silence of his mobile is normal.

8 pm and there can still be a whole night of dreamless sleep for him to get lost in.

8 pm and another day without Sherlock is no closer to him than it was 2 hours ago.

He rolls over to stare at the ceiling in the darkness, cold and lonely. It is strange to think that just two days ago he had been sleeping with Sherlock, in the boy’s bed, warm and content and so bloody happy. Just two days ago, everything had been perfect.

And now…

He wonders how this is possible, how his heart can still beat when it is broken into a million pieces, sharp little shards that dig into his insides. He knows what internal bleeding feels like; he knows the numbness that comes over a body in shock right before its heart stops beating, but this… this.

John fidgets some more, twisting uncomfortably in the sheets, and turns to look at the clock one more time, needing to see it. When it still shows 8 pm he sighs in relief. He settles on his side so that he can stare at the timepiece, finally sinking into the mattress comfortably. He watches every minute that does not pass by until he can feel himself become drowsy finally.

He falls asleep watching time stand still, not letting tomorrow come, and thinking about what he needs to do to make this right.

*

Morning dawns and John awakens slowly, eyes puffy and irritated, and he wonders if he has been crying in his sleep again, the way he sometimes does when the night terrors come. But if he has, there is no evidence of it lingering anywhere. He doesn’t remember Mary shaking him awake, telling him to keep it down because she can’t sleep with all of the noise he is making, like she usually does.

He gets ready for work mechanically, not even noticing what he is doing. He spends his day in a fog, not remembering much. When the final bell rings to signal the end of the day and the start of the weekend, he sits in his classroom at his desk, his mobile lying on the smooth wood in front of him, and waits.

Sherlock texts about this time, letting him know whether or not they can go over to his house that day. Sherlock always texts.

Sherlock does not text today.

John sits at his desk until he can see the sun start to set outside of his tiny excuse for a window in the classroom. He realises he has been staring at his mobile for a long time and it has stayed off; the screen is flat and empty and looks like a tiny black hole on top of his desk, sucking in all of John’s happiness and hope and crushing it into nothing.

He doesn’t understand how this happened. How he has given so much of himself to Sherlock that without him John is nothing; he is just a shell of a man, even more hollow and lifeless than he was before he met the mad genius.
He hadn’t wanted this to happen. He hadn’t wanted any of this to happen. He had tried so hard to keep this from happening.

John remembers the way he used to keep Sherlock at bay, even when his student tried to break through all of the walls that John had erected around them, trying to keep their relationship proper. He had been strong then; he had held all of the cards. As John sits at his desk, he tries to think about what changed. What happened to turn the tables, what happened to make him so completely wrapped up in Sherlock that John can’t even think about living his life without him? What happened to make him so dependent on keeping Sherlock that John would do anything—anything—to make him stay?

When had all of that happened?

Sherlock has taken over his life entirely and John has never even realised it. He had never known how much of his day revolved around Sherlock until the boy isn’t there anymore: texts in the morning to say hello because they can’t see each other; secret smiles in the corridors as students shuffle from one class to the next; picture messages of Sherlock’s classwork from other subjects with more in-depth answers to the questions than could possibly be needed at a secondary school level; blushes struggling to be kept at bay while John gives his lesson to Sherlock’s class; texts at the end of the day to tell him whether or not they can be with each other later; kisses and touches and cool sheets and skulls watching with empty eyes while they get lost in each other; goodbye snogs and lectures on being sure to eat a proper dinner and not just the stale biscuits that John had brought with him two days ago. Goodnight texts late at night because they can’t be with one another as they fall asleep.

And now there is nothing. Now there is only silence. Sherlock took it all with him when he left.

As John gathers up his things to head out, he stops suddenly and has to remember not to head over to Sherlock’s house. He stands in the middle of his classroom for a moment and thinks about where he should go before he remembers that he should go home, to Mary.

He wants to be angry at himself, disgusted that he can’t manage to go a few days without Sherlock in his life, furious at how dependent he has become on a teenage boy who can’t even make a decent cup of tea for himself. Yet he can’t even summon enough emotion for that. He walks down the corridors of the school and toward the exit and comes to a disturbing realization:

He doesn’t know how to function without Sherlock anymore, and he has never felt more broken in his life than he does at this moment. And he knows that he doesn’t want to feel like this this ever again, so he will do whatever he needs to make this feeling go away.

Whatever he needs, he decides with finality.

Instead of going home, John heads out to the pub. He doesn’t bother asking Mike to meet him; he doesn’t want company right now. All he wants is to be left alone to drown his misery in alcohol, and to think. Think about the stupid choices he has made to put himself in this position, and what he needs to do to get his life back on track, back to something decent and whole and good. His marriage is nothing more than a joke and a façade, he knows. Sherlock leaving has made John realise that the teen is exactly the one thing that John doesn’t want to live without.

And if the only thing that ever stood between him and Sherlock was his marriage—his failing marriage—well…the choice should have been rather obvious, shouldn’t it?

John sighs into his whisky and takes a deep drink. He knows he’s fucked this up royally. He wishes he could take their last conversation back, stop Sherlock’s harsh words right away and tell
him that he would give it all up for the teen. John promises himself that if he ever gets that chance to make things right, he'll do just that. He swears he will. He knows that it won't be all that simple, though. Even if John gets the chance to make it up to Sherlock and finally tell him his thoughts on the future of their relationship, there would still be the problem of him being Sherlock's teacher to deal with. Yet if John could make this whole mess up to Sherlock and get him back, John knows that he would start by telling him that he would end things with Mary as soon as it was safe for him to do so. The end of the school year, perhaps, after Sherlock has graduated and is no longer his student, when Sherlock can go off to university and John can leave the school free from suspicion.

John tries to take another drink of his whisky and frowns down at his empty glass, still thinking heavily. What does it matter if he has finally made the decision to do something about his marriage, about his life, now? When there is no one left to share it with?

What does any of it matter?

As he sits at the bar and orders his third double whisky, John is slightly surprised at himself. The last time he felt the desire to drink this heavily was when he first found out Mary was cheating on him. But even as that thought enters his mind he frowns, not completely sure of it—John's spent so much time staring into a bottle over the past several, miserable years that it's all become a little blurred around the edges. Indefinable.

After a few hours sitting alone at the pub, drunk and more alone than he's ever felt his entire life, he finds that it doesn't really matter, after all. Not his decision to leave Mary, not his drinking, not his pain. Without Sherlock, nothing matters. Not anymore.

John isn’t sober again for days.

*

He follows Sherlock’s request and doesn’t speak to him for a long, excruciating week—much longer than John had made Sherlock wait when he told the boy not to speak to him that one time, what feels like an eternity ago now.

He worries about Sherlock. Constantly. He knows Sherlock hates being around his brother—after only a few minutes with the elder Holmes, John can understand why—and he wonders how Sherlock is coping. John wonders if he is eating, if he is angry, if he is smoking again. If he is wanting something stronger than nicotine—that 7% solution that he has told John haltingly, sparingly, about. He knows that Sherlock won't go out and buy himself nicotine patches, so if he’s run out he will most likely be smoking again. John wonders if Sherlock is staying under Mycroft’s watchful eye or trying to sneak off undetected. He thinks about Sherlock’s too-thin coat because the stubborn brat wanted to use the extra money Mycroft had given him to buy some more science equipment, and he thinks about how the weather is still unseasonably cold. John spends days not eating, pacing about his home, drinking alone at the pub where he and Mike meet sometimes, checking his phone constantly.

There is nothing and John begins to think that Sherlock is never going to speak to him again. So when his text tone goes off in the middle of the night on Tuesday, he bolts upright in his bed, awake in an instant, reaching frantically for his mobile where it sits on the bedside table. He stares down at his screen and his heart beats erratically in his chest, knots churning in his stomach and his throat swallowing down the thick, stale taste of old whisky.

*Received: John? SH*
John’s hand clenches around the phone tightly and he releases a sigh of happiness, his heart exploding in a frantic pace and butterflies erupting in his stomach. He feels a huge smile growing on his face, and he doesn’t try to contain it. It is the first time he has smiled in a week, and all it takes is his name showing through a text sent from Sherlock’s number.

Received: I’m not angry anymore. SH

John looks down at the screen of his phone, the light bright in the darkness of his bedroom. Mary is sleeping soundly next to him, oblivious to her husband’s clandestine conversation with his lover. He is so devastatingly happy and relieved that he can do nothing more than stare at his mobile in his hand, reading Sherlock’s message over and over.

Sherlock’s next text comes in the interim of John’s thoughts and his overwhelming joy that the teen is speaking to him, but Sherlock seems to take his unresponsiveness as a sign that John is ignoring him. John’s text tone goes off softly twice in a row.

Received: Are you still mad at me? SH

Received: I’m sorry. Please don’t be mad at me. SH

God, he doesn’t know how Sherlock can keep blaming himself for things that John has ruined. John wonders briefly if it has something to do with the fact that everyone Sherlock has ever loved has left him, therefore, in Sherlock’s mind, he thinks that he is responsible for having no one. It makes sense when John thinks back on all of the times that Sherlock has desperately apologised or asked John to stay, asked John not to leave him.

John feels sick to his stomach thinking about the idea of that, so he pushes it out of his mind and answers Sherlock instead.

Sent: Christ, Sherlock, no. I’m not mad at you.

Sent: You don’t have to be sorry. I’m sorry. I’m sorry that I make you feel that way and think those things about yourself. They’re not true, you know. I don’t see you like that at all.

Sent: I love you.

He waits for a response but it doesn’t come. His phone stays silent for so long that John begins to wonder if he dreamt Sherlock texting and is now having a one-sided conversation with the boy. So he scrolls back up his screen and confirms that, yes, Sherlock did indeed message him. When there is still no response to John’s last text, the man begins to think that maybe he said something wrong when he answered Sherlock, so he scrolls back up again and rereads the messages. He frowns when he can’t find any reason for why Sherlock won’t answer him back.

John sits in the dark, gripping his mobile tightly in his hands, and prays that Sherlock will say something, anything. He doesn’t even care how pathetic a part of himself thinks he is, holding onto every word that Sherlock has texted him and wishing desperately for more. He doesn’t even care what it is; if Sherlock doesn’t want to see him again but will keep speaking to him, John will take it. He’ll take anything Sherlock gives him, as long as John can keep him in his life.

His mobile goes off in his hand as someone rings through, the sound loud in the stillness of the room. John jumps at the suddenness of it and quickly silences the tone, looking over at Mary to make sure she hasn’t woken up. When he is certain she is still asleep, he climbs out of bed and heads quietly into the en suite. It isn’t until he has shut and locked the door that he answers, turning around on the spot and leaning against the door. He keeps his voice barely above a
whisper when he speaks.

“Sherlock?” he asks on a shaky sigh. He slides down the door to sit on the floor, legs drawn up to his chest like a child, and holds his breath.

From across the line there is the sound of shuffling, then more silence. And then, finally, he hears Sherlock’s voice, quiet like his own but so, so beautiful. “I… I love you, too, John,” Sherlock says haltingly, as if he isn’t quite sure of his words. “I don’t… I don’t know what—”

“Shh, love, it’s okay,” John soothes him, because he knows that Sherlock doesn’t understand. Sherlock doesn’t understand that you can love someone so much you think you might die from it and still argue with them, still be hurt by them and hurt them in return, and not end up being left by that person. Sherlock doesn’t understand that because he has never seen that. He has always been left. By everyone. “It’s fine,” John assures him, voice breaking for Sherlock’s confusion. “It’s all fine.”

But when Sherlock speaks again, he still sounds unsure. Confused and frightened and like he is at the end of his rope, struggling to hold on for just a little while longer. “I’ll be your whore,” he tells John, and the man cringes at Sherlock’s words. “If that’s all I’ll ever get to be for you, I’ll be that. I’ll be your dirty little secret. I’ll be anything you want me to be for you. Just, please, don’t let me end up being one of your regrets. Please don’t leave me.”

Jesus, John has never known anyone who is so fucked up that they think that this is the way a relationship is supposed to be. That Sherlock would say this, think that he has to sink so low just to make John want to stay with him, is heartbreaking. John wishes like hell that he could fix the boy, make him see that he doesn’t have to demean or degrade himself just to get someone to love him. He promises himself that he will spend the rest of his life trying to teach Sherlock that, if Sherlock will let him.

“Sherlock, no,” he says sharply, and he forgets that he should be keeping his voice down. “No.” He doesn’t want to hear Sherlock talk like that about himself, doesn’t want to hear all of the humiliating things that Sherlock thinks he needs to do—is willing to do—just to get John to love him. It makes him sick. “I’m not going to leave you,” John assures him. “You’re not my whore, and you’re not my dirty little secret, and you’re not my piece on the side. You’re my everything.” He doesn’t understand how Sherlock doesn’t know this, how Sherlock can’t see it when he can see so much that no one else can. “I’ll never regret what you and I have done. Never.”

John pauses and thinks hard for a second about what he is going to say next, but realises that the words need to be said no matter what. He realises that there is no going back now, even if he wanted to. He doesn’t want to, of course, and Sherlock deserves to know that. “I want you to know that you were right about what you said, though,” he whispers, and he can hear Sherlock take a shaky breath through the phone. “And I just wanted to say that I—”

“You don’t have to say anything,” Sherlock cuts him off in a rush. “I’m… I’m sorry that I said those things and put you in that position. I don’t want to rush you into anything—” Sherlock says in a small voice over the line, but John breaks through his ramble.

“Hush now, it’s okay,” John soothes. Sherlock is always so apologetic with John—too apologetic. Sorry about everything that he thinks John will abandon him over, all of the uniqueness that makes Sherlock who he is, that makes John love him so deeply. Despite all of the affection that John lavishes on him, he knows that Sherlock is still extremely insecure and always worried that John will be the next name on a long list of people who have left him. He wonders if that is why Sherlock is apologising for trying to force a decision out of him—because Sherlock thinks that John will decide against him in the end. John wouldn’t, of course, but Sherlock is so insecure that
he wouldn’t believe that, anyways. John wonders if he should tell Sherlock of his decision despite the other’s interjection, but he figures that right now is not the best time. Not when they have just made up from a fight. Sherlock might see it as nothing more than John simply trying to give Sherlock what he wants, and John doesn’t want that. So he searches for something else that he can say instead.

“I’m sorry, too,” he tells Sherlock tenderly after a moment.

There is a long pause from the other end of the line, the silence stretching out into an eternity. And then, finally, there is a soft, sad sigh and John hears, “I wish you could kiss me right now,” whispered in his ear.

He smiles and there is a strange tightness in his throat, a warmth stinging at the corners of his eyes. “I know,” he says. He can’t describe the happiness he feels at knowing that Sherlock still wants him, will still be with him, even after all of the ways that John has cocked things up. He feels right again, like the world had been tilted the wrong way while Sherlock was gone, but now it is back to normal. He feels like he has finally found his way home after being lost for days, searching for something that he has found once more.

He feels whole again.

It amazes him, the things they can do to each other, the force of their feelings for one another. It is frightening to know each holds the other’s happiness so firmly in his hands.

“I wish I could kiss you, too, love,” John tells him, dropping his voice back down to a whisper. “But you’ll come back soon and then we’ll get to spend the weekend together, and I’ll show you just how much you mean to me.” He pauses for a moment, wanting to say something but worrying that if he speaks the words too often, Sherlock will stop believing them. Then he realises he doesn’t care, because they will always be true, whether Sherlock believes them or not. So he says it anyways.

“I love you, Sherlock.”

He hears Sherlock sigh across the line. “You shouldn’t, John.” John can hear a slight hitch in the teen’s tone. “I don’t deserve it. You really shouldn’t love me.”

A sad smile strains John’s lips because he knows that Sherlock really believes what he said and that, no matter what John does for him or says to him, Sherlock will always believe that he doesn’t deserve to be loved. There is nothing John can say to make Sherlock believe that he deserves to be loved deeply, irrevocably, to make him see that he is worthy of that kind of affection, and it makes John’s heart break for him. All John can do is reassure Sherlock that he does feel that way, over and over and over again.

“I still do,” he whispers into the silence of the bathroom surrounding him. “I always will.”

*

Knowing that their weekend together is back on and wanting to take advantage of every single second he has with Sherlock, John decides that it would be prudent for him to try out the prescription that he had written up for Mike the other day for 50 milligrams of Viagra. He has never taken anything like it before—he has never needed to—and as a doctor he knows that it would be best to see how the pill affects him before using it with his lover.

So he takes it Wednesday evening, when he comes home from work, and an hour later he is
sporting a hard-on that is so stiff it very nearly hurts.

He takes himself off to the loo upstairs—being sure to avoid Mary—and locks himself in, deciding to hop in the shower for easy clean-up.

The water comes out of the showerhead too hot but John doesn’t adjust it. He knows that it will cool down after a time, the longer he is underneath it. And if what he has heard about these pills is the truth, he knows he may be standing there for a while.

Under the scorching spray of the water, he reaches a hand down between his legs and strokes himself experimentally as he thinks about Sherlock’s hot little mouth on his cock, wet and desperate and always so eager to please him. His cock gives an interested twitch at that image, so he thinks of the way that Sherlock fumbles about sometimes, so unsure of what he is doing in bed, not knowing that he drives John wild with every move, every kiss, every touch, every look.

He thinks about Sherlock on his knees in front of him at that moment, right there in the shower, mouth open and slack—just the way John has taught him to wait for cock—hair plastered to his head and soaking wet, his thin, pale body shiny from the water cascading down it.

John has never fucked Sherlock’s mouth in this position, with the teen down on his knees in front of him, at the perfect height to take the man in. John leans forward in the shower and braces one hand on the cold, slick tile of the wall while his other hand strokes over his prick furiously to the image that his mind has provided him of his young lover. He imagines looking down at Sherlock while he thrusts harshly, deeply, into the open, waiting mouth, Sherlock’s spit slicking down his chin and mixing with the water from the shower until John can’t tell which is which anymore. He thinks about Sherlock moaning around his cock, gagging on it as John pushes in hard and deep, Sherlock’s hand twitching towards his own erection.

He imagines telling Sherlock that he isn’t allowed to touch himself, not until John says he can, not until John is ready. He imagines Sherlock whining desperately—frantically—at his order but obeying him like a good boy, so eager and willing to please John.

At that last thought he comes into his hand spectacularly, leaning his forehead against the cool tile and panting harshly. Bringing his hand up underneath the stream of water, he washes his mess away slowly, savouring the warm, fuzzy feel of his climax as he grins sloppily at the shower walls, giddy after such an amazing climax. He finishes up washing the rest of his body, but when he reaches back down to clean his prick off, he is shocked to find it still hard.

He stares down at it for a moment, unsure what to do with it.

As a doctor, he knows that everybody reacts to pills differently. He knows this. But a part of him had been under the impression that he would take the pill, climax, have perhaps thirty minutes or so to recuperate, and then be good to go once more.

He did not expect to have a fantastic orgasm and still be hard enough to fuck his lover again.

He contemplates his options for a moment, standing beneath the spray of the shower which has now turned luke-warm during the time he has been under it. The erection doesn’t hurt, so he doubts that it is something that he needs to worry about—at least for the moment. He figures he can either toss off again and see if that settles it, or he can ignore it and hope that it will go away on its own.

One of those options sounds infinitely more pleasurable than the other.
So he decides to stay in the shower and he tugs at himself again, a little softer than normal at first because he is still rather sensitive. As he continues, though, the need to become a bit rougher emerges as he goes on and finds it slightly more difficult to climax than the first time around. But it happens, eventually, and the feel of a second climax literally knocks the breath out of him and makes him a bit weak in the knees. His vision swims a little and his skin tingles and feels rather strange, but there is a warm looseness in his belly, a distinct buzz in all of his extremities that feels amazing, and he chuckles at himself giddily, if not a bit breathlessly.

After the second orgasm, everything seems fine. His erection goes away after he climaxes and there seems to be no problems. He figures that if this is how the pill is going to affect him, then it will be perfect for this coming weekend.

Satisfied with himself—and feeling more than a little tired now—he finishes up in the shower, washing up with tepid water, and dries off. He pulls on some pyjamas and goes back downstairs to the sitting room to relax in his chair because he feels like watching a bit of telly before drifting off into a peaceful, sated sleep. Mary sits on the sofa on the other side of the room and reads quietly for some time before saying that she is going to bed.

John thinks about going with her for a moment. It’s slightly later in the evening, but not too late, and he is a little sleepy after his two orgasms. However, when he thinks about lying in bed next to someone—someone warm and soft whom he could very easily imagine is Sherlock—his body begins to feel strange; a bit like his cock is trying to do something that his mind doesn’t quite want it to. So he thinks it best that he stay downstairs for the time being.

Mary doesn’t ask him to go up with her and she doesn’t comment on him staying downstairs, either. They don’t even say goodnight to one another, but John hardly notices. He fidgets in his chair until the strange feeling in his groin finally goes away, and he continues watching telly in peace until his mobile pings with an incoming text.

It’s from Sherlock, of course, and John smiles when he reads it.

*Received:* Are you still awake? *SH*

*Sent:* Yes

*Received:* Is Mary still awake? *SH*

*Sent:* No

*Received:* I’ll show you mine if you show me yours :)

John looks down at his mobile, stunned speechless for a moment. He forgets, sometimes, that Sherlock is still a child. The boy is so brilliant, so mature in certain ways, that John doesn’t think of him as a teenager any longer; Sherlock’s youth and immaturity haven’t been issues in John’s head for some time now, except for the occasional irrational argument and temper tantrum. But moments like this bring the problem screeching back to him.

*Sent:* Sherlock, you’re with your brother!

*Received:* Don’t be dull, John. That’s why they invented bathroom door locks. *SH*

*Received:* Well, maybe not the ONLY reason they invented bathroom door locks, but certainly conducive to our needs right now. *SH*

He thinks about how he is going to tell Sherlock not to send him a picture message of his naked
body, thinks about how he is not going to end up sexting his teenage lover while he is in his sitting room with his wife right upstairs. When he goes to type out his response, however, what comes out instead is:

*Sent: You first*

The message goes through before John can change his mind and cancel it, but it doesn’t really matter because he wouldn’t have stopped it anyways.

*Received: Picture Message*

It is a set of pictures of Sherlock’s body in the bathtub, the water all around him making his skin shine in the bright white light of whatever hotel bathroom he is in. There is a thin layer of dissipating suds that cover him immodestly. In the pictures, he can see that Sherlock is half-hard already, and he is barely even touching his cock. It just sits against his belly, looking flushed and perfect while he holds his mobile over his body to take the picture, the tip of the head just peeking out of his foreskin. The slit of his cock is shining just like the rest of his skin, and John can’t tell if it is from the water or if it is precome.

John’s cock instantly hardens as he looks at the picture, filling out so fast that it leaves John momentarily dizzy with the loss of blood to his brain.

Christ, it is like he is 20 years old again. Which he guesses is the whole point of the damn pill, but still. He thinks that this is rather starting to get out of hand now.

A million reasons for why he shouldn’t be doing this flit through his mind, but he can’t really find any of them viable enough to make him keep his cock in his pants. So he pulls his pyjama bottoms down while he sits there in the dark room, the only light coming from the glow of the telly that is still on, and he tries to take a decent enough picture of his own prick to send back to his lover in return.

Part of him feels more than a little foolish: he is 35 years old and sexting dirty pictures of his privates for the first time in his life, to someone who is not his wife. He would never in a million years consider doing this with Mary. In fact, she had tried a few years back and he had been so uncomfortable with the idea that he had made her stop.

But with Sherlock…

He would do anything Sherlock wanted, if only it would give him just one more piece of the boy, one more look, one more touch, one more kiss. Anything.

He is rewarded for his efforts—just as he hoped he would be—with another picture coming through of Sherlock in the bath. This time it is a close up of Sherlock’s cock, hard and red and beautiful. The picture is so close that John can now tell that it is certainly a bead of precome that has gathered at Sherlock’s slit, see it welling up at the tip, ready to dribble down the side. He can also see the small, light brown birthmark on the shaft, close to the head, that John loves to nibble at softly.

John knows it’s his turn to send a picture, but he doesn’t really care about that anymore. His cock pulses in his hand and he strokes it, trying to release some of the uncomfortable pressure he feels, while he types out a text with one shaky hand.

*Sent: What are you thinking about?*

It takes a moment for a response to come through, and John passes the time by setting his mobile
on his thigh and using both hands on himself, one stroking up and down his shaft while the other
fondles his balls. He closes his eyes against the thought of how he must look in the soft, glowing
light of the telly, wanking off once again to the idea of Sherlock touching himself.

*Received: About what it will feel like when you fuck me*

He cuts off a loud groan when he realises it has slipped out of his mouth. God, John has never
wanted someone so badly before in his life. Just the idea of fucking Sherlock, of pounding into his
tight body, is almost enough to have him come right then. He can feel the familiar tightening low
in his belly, the delicious burn along his nerve endings as he gets closer and closer. Before he can
finish, another message comes through on his mobile. This file, he notices, is different from the
normal pictures he has been getting.

*Fucking hell, it’s a video*, John realises with a jolt, his hands stilling on his cock instantly and
letting go of himself in favor of fumbling to pick up his phone. He shakily hits the play button and
is careful to turn the volume down just enough that he can still hear it, although just barely.

The beginning of the video is nothing more than a dizzying view of legs and porcelain and
splashing water as Sherlock tries to find a good spot to hold his phone at, but it soon settles over his
groin, angled so that John can see Sherlock stroking himself, but not much else.

John can hear everything, though. Every noise that Sherlock is making, every soft splash of water
as he jerks himself off in the bath. Every pant, and moan, and bloody hell how can Sherlock make
such obscene noises knowing his brother is right outside the bathroom door? Does the child have
no shame?

In the video, Sherlock spreads his legs wider, actually lifting one to drape it across the edge of the
bathtub, and John’s brain almost short-circuits.

Shameless, indeed.

From the speaker of his phone, the tinny, distant sound of Sherlock’s moans begin to form words.
One word, actually.

“*John,*” he breathes over the video, and the sound goes straight to John’s groin, making his cock
twitch uncomfortably.

“*God, John, yes. So good. Fuu—*” the curse is tapered off into a lewd moan. “I want you in me.
Can’t wait until you fuck me. Want it so bad.”

John’s mouth has run dry, his brain has gone offline, he is left with no motor functions and only
one obscene thought in his mind. He wants. Desperately. He makes some sort of ridiculous,
embarrassing whine in the back of his throat and spits into his hand crudely, but he is past caring at
his point. All he needs is release, all he wants is the feeling of smooth slickness. He resumes
pumping his cock, fast and hard now, just the way he wants to take Sherlock. He squeezes his fist
and thinks about the tight heat of Sherlock’s body, the soft feel of his arse around John’s cock. He
is almost at the brink again—for the third time that night—and it sounds as if Sherlock is, too,
when the video cuts out.

With a desperate, frustrated cry, John’s hand leaves his cock to fumble with his phone, pressing the
play button again and hoping that there is more to the file. It just starts back at the beginning,
though, and John does not let out a choked sob—most certainly not. His prick gives a painful throb
as he sits there dumbly, holding his mobile and trying to decide what to do. He figures he can at
least start the video over again and try to finish to it, although he knows it is doubtful—he wants to
see Sherlock come, wants to hear Sherlock as he orgasms. John knows that is the only thing that will finish him off right now.

As he sits there contemplating, his mobile pings quietly once more. Hopeful that it might be the second half of the video file, John quickly opens the message but is disappointed. It is not a video message. It is another picture. The image downloads and John lets out a frustrated growl at what he sees on his screen: Sherlock’s hand clenched around the shaft of his cock, just beneath the head, foreskin pulled back tight to show off the crown with a mess of come dripping down his fingers. Quickly following that text comes another:

Received: Hope it was as good for you as it was for me. Going to bed now. Goodnight, John. SH

Goddamn it, John thinks, frustrated. He sends back a text that he hopes doesn’t make him sound as desperate as he feels, but there is no response to it; Sherlock is ignoring him, probably getting a good laugh out of all of this. John tries not to think about how infuriating the boy can be, how frustrating and annoying—those things won’t bring him to orgasm. His erection is almost unbearably painful now, and John continues to stroke himself as he reopen's and stares at the last picture he received, trying to imagine how Sherlock had looked and what he had sounded like when he came.

God, how he wishes Sherlock were there with him. John would lick up Sherlock’s mess and take that perfect cock in his mouth again, just to hear the strangled little noises that Sherlock makes when he is over stimulated and tired from an orgasm. John’s cock pulses in his grip at the very thought, but the feel of his hand is unsatisfying. He strokes himself harder but soon finds that it just isn’t enough, it’s not nearly enough. It only acts to frustrate him as he gets nowhere nearer to climaxing than he was when he first got hard. He wants Sherlock there with him, he wants Sherlock to be the one touching his cock, sucking him off, pressing his own hard prick against John’s erection. He wants Sherlock, not his sodding hand, so John gives up with a frustrated sigh.

He sits there in his chair for a moment, pyjamas tugged ridiculously halfway down his thighs, and wonders what in the hell he is going to do. He looks down at his mobile once more and sees that it is late, but still not late enough that he can’t give Mike a ring and see if his friend will meet him at the pub. He thinks that after a night like this, a few beers and a large order of greasy pub food is in line. So John shoots off a text to him and goes upstairs to quietly get redressed, careful not to wake Mary. She continues to sleep soundly, though, and doesn’t stir as John heads back downstairs and out the front door. As he is pulling out of his drive, his mobile goes off with a text from Mike saying that he is putting his kids to bed, but that he can meet John at the pub in a bit.

When John gets to the pub, he sits down at the bar top and orders the greasiest, heaviest meal he can find on the menu and instantly throws back a couple of beers to weigh down the effects of the medication. He knows the pill can last anywhere from 4 to 12 hours and he’ll be damned if he is going to spend half a day being so sensitive that something as simple as a carefully worded text from Sherlock (or even just the thought of him) will get John hard again. He is halfway through his extra order of chips before his friend walks through the door of the pub, dressed in wrinkled clothes and looking half asleep.

Mike makes his way over to John and slides into a seat next to him. When the bartender looks over to see if Mike wants his usual, the brown haired man just shakes his head. “Why did you want to meet me so late on a bloody school night?” he asks John, glaring at the shorter man as John shoves some more chips in his mouth to try to avoid answering the question for a second longer.

“I, er…I took one of those pills to see what would happen,” John says with a blush that he covers up with his pint as he lifts it to his mouth. “Sh—uh, my...” John trails off, the blush leaving his
face instantly as he realises how close he came to saying Sherlock’s name to Mike. The other man frowns at him, confused as John stumbles over his words. But John doesn’t know what to refer to Sherlock as—it just seems weird to call him his boyfriend to someone else, and he won’t be caught dead saying the word “lover” in front of Mike, so John leaves the awkwardness alone and just skips the title completely. “He’s out of town right now so I figured that I’d use the opportunity to take the pills out for a test drive. I thought that I’d be able to…take care of things myself but,” the blush returns full force, “it turns out that my hand isn’t as good in bed as I’ve always thought it was.”

There is a moment where Mike simply stares across the bar top at John, his face completely blank. And then the man barks out a laugh that is loud enough to draw the attention of the few patrons still in the pub and claps John jovially on the back. “Really, mate?” he asks, a gigantic grin splitting his face. “You’re not just taking the piss?”

John shakes his head, embarrassment getting the better of him. “I couldn’t go to bed and lie next to Mary. She would have noticed; she’s a bit of a cuddler. And I didn’t want her to think I wanted to have sex with her. I just needed a few hours out of the house, to let the pill wind down.”

“So you’ve completely stopped sleeping with her?” Mike asks him, reaching over to steal a couple of chips off of John’s plate.

“Yeah. I don’t—” he stops himself because he is about to say that he doesn’t want to cheat, but that’s exactly what he is doing. Only he has to remind himself that he is doing it to Mary with Sherlock. “I don’t have those feelings for her anymore.” He wonders briefly if he should tell Mike about the other decisions he’s made concerning Mary and his marriage, but that conversation seems a little too deep for a Wednesday night when he only has two beers in him, so he decides to keep his mouth shut for now.

“How long ago did you take the pill?” he asks John through a mouthful of food.

John sighs and presses the heel of his hand against his crotch under the countertop. The erection seems to have flagged somewhat, which is good news—at least he won’t have to go to hospital for it—but he can feel the beginnings of a rather large headache coming on. “Almost 4 hours ago now,” he answers, purposefully omitting the fact that this is the fourth erection he has been the proud owner of in that amount of time. There are some things that even best mates don’t share.

Mike just shrugs at him from down the bar and wipes his hands on the leg of his trousers. “I didn’t have any problems,” he tells John happily, a smug smile growing wide on his face. “Becca loved it, too. Thanks, mate,” he says, almost as an afterthought.

John grins at that and finishes off the last of his chips. “Glad I could help you get a leg over,” he tells Mike with a smile. “Just like old times, huh? You never could get any on your own.”
“Cheers,” Mike says with a laugh, reaching across the table to grab John’s pint and raising it as he takes a drink.

* 

Sherlock comes back late Thursday evening. Too late for John to risk seeing him, although he desperately wants to. John hasn’t laid eyes on him in over a week and it feels like an eternity. They text each other through the night instead—so constantly that John has to turn the volume of his message tone down just so that Mary won’t ask any questions—and make plans for the next day.

Mary is leaving first thing in the morning and they can’t help but want to take full advantage of their first day together—he and Sherlock agree to skive off of school and hope that no one thinks twice about their combined absences. Sherlock has been gone for over a week now, though, so it won’t be conspicuous at all for John to miss a day. (As Sherlock says, they are all idiots anyways, and he assures John that there is little chance of them being caught.)

The man knows that he is too old to be doing immature things like this, things like calling in sick to work just to spend the day with his lover. But when Sherlock suggests the idea, John doesn’t think twice about it. He wants to have as much time with Sherlock as he possibly can, damn the childishness and irresponsibility of it.

Received: What time should I be over at yours? SH

Sent: Mary leaves at 8:30

Received: I’ll be there at 8 and wait across the street. SH

Sent: Sherlock, you can’t be seen

Sent: I was thinking that maybe you should actually not come by until after 9, in case Mary forgets something and comes back

He wants every moment he can have with Sherlock, this is true, but he knows that they still have to be careful. Sherlock may not care about getting caught, but that only means that John has to try twice as hard to make sure that they aren’t.

‘I’ll be there at 8. SH’ is the reply that he gets and John sighs but grins, unable to help it. Of course Sherlock will be there at 8. There would be no stopping him and, truthfully, John doesn’t really want to.

He settles into bed thinking that is the last of their conversation, pulling the covers up around his chin comfortably, when another message rings through.

Received: I can’t wait for tomorrow. I’ve thought about what that day might be like for a long time. SH

It is still amazing to John that someone, somewhere out there, wants him so badly. Badly enough to fantasize about him the way he fantasizes about Sherlock, who is all ethereal beauty and tumultuous force and shining brilliance. How can someone as plain as he is possibly bring about the same feelings in Sherlock that the boy does in him? It seems physically impossible. And yet he knows that Sherlock would never lie to him.

John has to admit: it is a wonderful feeling, being wanted, being desired. Being loved. His stomach tightens at Sherlock’s text, and his skin breaks out into tingles, and the grin on his face is
positively stupid, he knows, but it can’t possibly be helped.

Sent: I know, love. Me, too. You have no idea how many times I’ve thought about taking you, how many times I’ve had to stop myself so that I wouldn’t frighten you by going too fast. I love you so much, and I promise tomorrow will be amazing.

Sent: Go to sleep, now, or you’ll be too tired to enjoy it :)

Sherlock’s response is quick in coming:

Received: You’re just telling me to go to sleep so that I won’t keep you up any longer. You’re the one who has to worry about being too tired for tomorrow, old man. SH

John knows Sherlock is teasing him, but there is a wide undercurrent of truth in that, too. Sherlock is much, much younger than he is and has already proven (several times over) that he obviously doesn’t need much sleep or food or even time to keep his libido up. John on the other hand...

Even on a good day (when he has had plenty of sleep, when he isn’t worried or stressed out about something, when he hasn’t seen Sherlock in a few days—but not too many—and is a controllable level of aroused) he is only able to last a decent amount of time and come spectacularly once. And now he hasn’t seen Sherlock in over a week, he is so horny there is the very real possibility of premature ejaculation, and it is already well past midnight. He’ll be lucky if he doesn’t come in his pants at the first touch of Sherlock’s hand. Not for the first time, he is immensely thankful for those tiny blue pills hidden away in his bedside table.

Sent: Well then let this old man sleep. I’d hate to pass out on top of you from exhaustion.

Received: Don’t worry. There’s no doubt in my mind that I’ll be able to keep you up… SH

John stares at the glowing screen of his mobile for a moment in surprise.

Sent: Sherlock, did you just make a pun?

He snickers as he sends the text.

‘…maybe…SH’ is Sherlock’s dubious reply, and John tries to hold in a chuckle.

Sent: Let me go to sleep, you twonk.

Received: I can’t wait to see you tomorrow. SH

Sent: Me, too. Good night, sweetheart. I love you.

Sherlock’s response after that is quick and concise, and John knows that that is the end of their conversation, so he turns off the screen of his mobile and settles under the sheets comfortably. When he finally drifts off into a peaceful, happy sleep, it is with his hand clenched tight around his mobile and a huge, satisfied smile on his face.

And with the knowledge that, tomorrow, he will finally have Sherlock completely.
I Feel the Heat of Your Heart Beating Next to Mine

Chapter Notes

Warnings: Praise kink, (maybe a little bit more of the whole daddy kink thing, if you want to view it that way), fingering, dirty talk, and anal penetration.

Beta’d by iriswallpaper and Brit-picked by Indelible_Ink. Song inspiration for this chapter is "Stay Awhile" by Ryan Star. There are also a few lines in this chapter inspired by the songs “Love Remains the Same” by Gavin Rossdale, “Still Worth Fighting For” by My Darkest Days, “Scars” by Papa Roach, “Eyes Open” by Taylor Swift, and “Start of Something Good” by Daughtry.

Friday morning John wakes up feeling drunkenly happy and pops off into the loo to take his half-pill of Viagra before Mary sees. He continues to prepare for work as if it is any other day, washing up and dressing fully. As it gets later, he nervously begins to keep one eye on his wife and the other on the clock on his bedside table.

While John watches Mary get ready to leave, he realises suddenly that they have not argued in several days, the entire time that Sherlock has been away. It is new and it is strange, but it is also so, so nice. To know that they aren’t going to jump back into the middle of a previous, unfinished row when he gets home from work in the evenings, or when he wakes up in the mornings, is something that he hasn’t experienced in years. She smiles at him as she finishes packing, talking happily about nothing of importance, and he notices that she looks younger when she smiles that way, prettier. She hugs him before she leaves and he hugs her back. John is happy, truly happy, in a way that he hasn’t been in years and so is she—he can see it. He does not stop to dwell on the fact that they are happy, yes, but most certainly not because of each other.

That doesn’t matter, though. None of that matters today. Not today.

After Mary leaves, John goes immediately into their en suite and stands in front of the mirror over the sink as he works his wedding ring off of his finger. It squeezes the skin unpleasantly, sticking awkwardly after a decade of being worn. It pops off eventually, though, if not a bit reluctantly and painfully. John stares at the dull shine of it for a long moment before he takes a deep breath and opens up the medicine cabinet. He places the ring carefully inside and closes the door with a decisive click. Then he calls into work sick, just like he and Sherlock had planned. Not long after that is a timid knock on his door, and he rushes to open it and let the boy inside before any neighbours see him standing on John’s front step.

When John closes the door and locks it behind Sherlock, the two stand silently in the entryway staring at each other. Neither one of them knows what to say to the other, and it is awkward in a way that it hasn’t been in a long time. John doesn’t know exactly what he should be doing—what Sherlock wants him to do. Should they have breakfast first? Should they sit and talk about what is going to happen? Or does Sherlock not care about any of that? Does Sherlock want to do this immediately, no more putting it off?

John looks over at him and sees Sherlock blushing slightly, head down but eyes looking up at John bashfully through long lashes. John feels a deep desire in him for Sherlock which has only grown during the time that they have been apart and the decision John has made about his wife. He has
the intense urge to kiss Sherlock suddenly, so he does. He thinks that is as good a place to start as any.

Sherlock still tastes minty from his toothpaste but underneath it is a flavour that is all him, something soft and subtle that tastes like warm flesh. John dips his tongue into Sherlock’s mouth to taste more of it. He brings his hands up to cup the sides of Sherlock’s face so that he can’t move away, even though he knows Sherlock isn’t going anywhere. He falls into John, against the man’s chest, opening his mouth and meeting John’s tongue with his own, and their kiss becomes wet and slick and desperate.

Large, warm hands suddenly envelope John’s own as they cradle Sherlock’s face softly, and he can feel long probing fingers go immediately to his left ring finger, caressing the indented, untanned skin that is now bare.

“You took it off,” Sherlock says against his lips, not breaking contact. It isn’t a question; it sounds more like Sherlock is saying the words just to hear them spoken out loud, as if that will confirm what he is feeling with his own fingers.

“Yea—” John begins, planning on saying more, but Sherlock’s mouth is suddenly insistent against his own, cutting off his words with a harsh kiss that literally steals his breath away.

John feels Sherlock’s hands drop down to grip the front of his button-down shirt, fingers tangling tightly in the cotton and clenching around it. He uses the leverage to pull John tighter to him, pushing his groin up to meet John’s. Sherlock automatically widens his thighs so that John can slot a leg between them and they can rub against each other.

Sherlock is already indecently hard and John isn’t far from meeting him. Nervous butterflies erupt in his stomach—maddening, nauseating—and suddenly the fact that they are so close to actually doing this is surreal. But Sherlock’s moan and Sherlock’s cock rubbing against his own are very real, and they ground John harshly in the moment and what is about to happen.

“Now, John,” Sherlock mumbles against his mouth, lips hot and plump with blood from their kissing. “I want it now.”

And suddenly John is so unsure. A part of him knows that there is the very real chance that he will be awful at this, that he won’t be able to meet Sherlock’s expectations. The possibility of it is terrifying and John has to suddenly stop kissing him, has to pull away from him and tell him before this goes any further.

“Sherlock, before we do this I—I just want to let you know that…I haven’t…” he can’t even finish the sentence, but that’s all right because Sherlock knows already. Sherlock always knows.

“Oh, but that’s not all, is it?” Sherlock deduces, and he sounds somewhat startled, as if he is surprised that there is something more that he had not been able to see before now. “She said something, didn’t she?” he asks. A small frown furrows his brow and his mouth turns down at the corners. “To you. To lower your confidence in bed.”

It isn’t a question so John doesn’t answer. He couldn’t, anyways. All he can do is turn away from
Sherlock, ashamed.

How did he ever think that he could possibly satisfy Sherlock? He is an idiot. He’ll fuck this up, he knows he will. Make a fool out of himself in the worst, most shameful way possible. He won’t be able to satisfy Sherlock, won’t be able to give Sherlock what he is craving, and that thought kills him. The possibility that he won’t gratify the only person in the world who he wants to make happy is gut-wrenching and painful.

He moves to turn away from Sherlock, not wanting to face him at the moment, but a hand on his shoulder stops John and pulls him close to a soft, warm body.

“John, everything that we’ve done up until now has been incredible,” Sherlock whispers to him as he wraps his thin arms around John’s neck, pulling the man back into his kisses. Sherlock’s lips are warm and soft and forgiving against his skin. “You always make me feel amazing. I love everything that we do so much, and I’m sure I’m going to love this, too. I know you’ll take care of me, and I know that this will be perfect.”

Sherlock moves back in to kiss John on the mouth again, but John isn’t placated by Sherlock’s words the way that he wants to be, the way that he knows Sherlock wants him to be. He can’t help it. Sherlock has certain delusions about this; he doesn’t understand what is going to happen—how uncomfortable it will be for him, even if John is amazing at it.

And again Sherlock hears what John is trying to figure out how to say out loud before he even gets the chance to put it to words.

“You’re afraid of hurting me,” Sherlock states, pulling away from John enough for the two of them to look each other in the eye. Sherlock’s face is open and exposed, trusting even as he speaks about everything that John fears will go wrong. “It’s been years since you’ve had anal sex and you’re worried that you have forgotten how to make it pleasurable.”

He’ll never quite get over how Sherlock does that. He doesn’t think he’ll ever get used to the shock of having his most intimate and secret fears and desires laid out before him in such a flippant manner. But Sherlock is right. Again. Sherlock is always so bloody right.

John has had anal sex before, a number of times. It has just been a long time since he last did it. He and Mary were always off-again-on-again at the beginning of their relationship during university, and John dated a number of adventurous girls and also a decent amount of blokes during their many breaks. However, the last time he was with a man was thirteen years ago now. Mary had never been a fan of anal sex but he had finally gotten her to relent a few years into their marriage, though they never did it often. It has been over two years since the last time he has penetrated anyone anally for sex.

John knows it shouldn’t worry him so much—he is a doctor. He understands the mechanics of it well enough. But there is a difference between being professional and clinical about it, and doing it to give your partner pleasure. Sherlock is a virgin, and John knows that stretching to take a cock and enjoy it is a lot different than stretching to take a couple of fingers for a prostate exam that will be over in a few minutes.

“I just,” he starts, but his voice catches in his throat and he has to lick his lips and try again. “I just don’t want to hurt you.”

Sherlock doesn’t miss a single beat, doesn’t pause for a moment. “I’m not scared, John,” he answers quickly, deep voice full of conviction. “I want you to do this. I’ve been waiting a long time for it. Don’t make me wait any longer. Please.”
The sound of Sherlock begging John to fuck him is more than the man can stand. He groans and pulls Sherlock back towards him, crushing their mouths together in a way that is wild and slightly painful. Sherlock surges forward to meet him, a happy little sigh escaping his full lips as he practically falls into John and the man takes Sherlock’s weight, lets Sherlock rub against his body and melt in his arms.

John loves every second of it.

He can feel Sherlock bring shaky fingers across his chest to the buttons of his shirt and John follows his lead, follows wherever Sherlock wants to go, and he tugs at the brunet’s faded tee. It slips easily over Sherlock’s head with no resistance from the body underneath it, and once it is gone John can’t get rid of the rest of Sherlock’s clothes fast enough.

They begin ripping at each other’s trousers and pants in the middle of the entryway, frantic and so, so desperate for one another. John has him almost completely naked save for his underwear before he manages to tear himself away from Sherlock.

This isn’t how he wants this to happen.

He wants this to be slow and gentle and comfortable. He wants them to be lying in his bed, Sherlock spread out on his sheets with John above him, covering him, protecting him.

“The bedroom,“ he pants as Sherlock attacks his neck. “Sherlock, God, the bedroom, please.”

Sherlock makes a noise of discontent, but he allows John to drag him up the stairs and down the hallway. They stumble into the room together, hands all over one another, fingers tangling in hair and running down bare skin. He manœuvre Sherlock over towards the bed but they don’t let go of each other long enough to climb into it properly. Instead, John simply backs Sherlock up until his legs hit the edge of the mattress and then they are both suddenly tumbling down onto it, their hands clutching at each other frantically as they try to stay connected to one another. Sherlock spreads himself out beneath John and the man suddenly wants to see him—all of him—lying in his own bed, where he has wanted Sherlock for so, so long.

John has never seen Sherlock’s bare flesh in the white light of the early morning sun, and he takes the opportunity to soak the sight in. They have only ever been with each other during the late afternoon, when the sun is setting and lighting everything ablaze in soft pinks and warm oranges. Sherlock’s skin soaks up the colours of the setting sun so beautifully, always glowing rosy and dusky. There was that once, of course, when John went to Sherlock’s house to cook him breakfast on the weekend and take care of him, but it had been late morning by the time John managed to sneak away from Mary and make it to Sherlock’s. When John had arrived that day and watched Sherlock lying in bed, there was a splendour that only hinted at this. Because now…

The bright light of the early morning sets fire to the bedroom, making everything burn brightly. Spread out on the white duvet beneath him, Sherlock shines radiantly, his pale, pale skin practically luminous. His hair is fanned out against the bed, a riot of curls in a deep chestnut colour that is streaked through with something almost auburn when it catches the sunlight. It is a wonder that the colour can seem so dark in certain settings and then shine so differently under the sun. Changeable, just like his eyes. Just like Sherlock himself.

Sherlock watches John watching him, body obediently still and pliant without having to be told. He stares at John out of eyes that are the palest green John has ever seen, so bright and so clear that John feels as if he will be set alight from their look alone.

His gaze travels lower, down Sherlock’s stretched body. His tummy looks soft now, the bones of
his ribs and his hips not showing through quite so jaggedly anymore. John has been striving to feed him up subtly, and it seems to be working, if only slightly. He follows the line of Sherlock’s perfect little belly button until it meets his cock, engorged from John’s kisses but not straining desperately yet. The tip is dry and barely peeking out of the foreskin, and John can see the outline of the head underneath the soft looking flesh that covers it. He suddenly wants very much to feel that foreskin retract against his tongue, so he bends to take Sherlock in his mouth gently. He doesn’t give any pressure, he just simply lets Sherlock’s prick sit against the inside of his mouth, on his tongue. Sherlock sighs at the gentle warmth encasing his cock and John can feel him pulse and throb in his mouth; he feels Sherlock engorge slightly and feels the delicate flesh of his foreskin pull back as Sherlock pulsates and grows bigger.

John pulls away to look at Sherlock one more time and glances up to find that the brunet has suddenly turned desperate in between one moment and the next. His mouth hangs open slightly from the teasing, fleeting touch to his dick which shines brightly in the sunlight now covered with John’s spit. Sherlock’s pupils have blown and there is only the thinnest ring of that gorgeous colour surrounding a wide, deep blackness. He pants and squirms beneath John as he reaches out to touch himself, no longer able to keep still for the man.

“My God, look at you, you beautiful thing,” John whispers to him, his voice breathy with wonder. “How are you even real?”

Sherlock blushes prettily at that and his eyes trail downwards in embarrassment. He bites his lip softly and looks back up at John, holding his hand out as he beckons to the older man down to lie with him.

John goes to him willingly.

They are both completely naked save for John’s vest, as usual, and he rubs his hard prick against Sherlock’s slowly, deeply, savouring the feel of them pressed together. Sherlock kisses him like a drowning man would breathe air and his long fingers are suddenly gripping the edge of John’s undershirt. He tugs it up John’s torso until it catches underneath John’s armpits where it stays, the blond not lifting his arms.

“Sherlock,” he warns against the boy’s mouth, and Sherlock whines lowly as he gives the vest another tug. “Sweetheart, you know I can’t.”

Beneath him Sherlock bucks up, rubbing their cocks together maddeningly. He pants against John’s mouth and pulls on John’s shirt one more time.

“Please,” Sherlock whispers, the words smearing across John’s mouth as the man continues to kiss him, heedless that he is trying to speak. “If you’re going to fuck me, then you have to let me see you. All of you. I’m giving you this; give me yourself in return.”

John stops his ministrations at Sherlock’s words, turning to look at the boy in amazement.

He is right, of course. Absolutely right. How can John ask this of Sherlock, how can John take this from him, without giving him back anything in return? Sherlock is trusting John with his body, trusting John with his heart, trusting John with everything he has. How can John not show him that same trust?

His breath stutters in his throat as he makes the decision. Something akin to nausea roils inside his stomach slightly but he forges on, wanting to give Sherlock what he is asking for, wanting to give Sherlock all of himself, desperate for Sherlock to accept him. John swallows thickly as he pulls away from Sherlock, up to his knees, and grabs the back of the collar of his vest. He pulls it over
his head before he can think twice about it and, not for the first time, he wonders what Sherlock could possibly see in him, broken and battered as he is.

With Sherlock’s perfect form laid out before him, John is unpleasantly aware of the way his own body looks, very nearly 20 years older than Sherlock’s and more worn around the edges. Logically he knows that he doesn’t really have a lot to be ashamed of: his years in the Army have left a strong layer of stubborn muscle which hasn’t faded since his discharge and which shows through in all the right places—his arms, thighs, and back mostly. He is definitely a little softer around the middle than he would like to be, but he knows that is to be expected of a man his age. So, unless he wants to spend a couple of hours a day working out and hardly touching Chinese takeaway or fish and chips ever again, his slight belly is inevitable.

The biggest difference between his body and Sherlock’s, however, are the scars. John’s skin shows his years in the number of battles he has fought in his lifetime.

There are the marks on his knuckles from the time he had gotten into a fight with a boy for picking on Harry when they were kids and John had punched him squarely in the mouth, despite the jagged metal braces the kid wore. There is the gash across his stomach from a pub fight he had gotten into during his university years, over Mary of all sodding things. There is the thin yet long sliver of a scar which runs diagonally down his right pectoral, a souvenir from the first year of his residency when a patient had come in high off of his arse and attacked him in a fit of paranoia as John had tried to take his vitals. There is the weathered skin from years under the desert sun, testament to long days spent out in the field, treating soldiers wherever he could—sometimes right where they had fallen. His upper right arm has several scars from shrapnel, when an IED went off close to him as he was tending to a man who had taken a bullet to the chest during a raid. His hands are covered in callouses from years of hard labour, when he was younger and he had to bring in money to help take care of his family. Some of the callouses, though, are from gripping guns tightly during long, unending hours of practise at shooting ranges and time spent in combat zones. There are even small scars all over his fingers from nicks caused by his early days practising his scalpel and field surgery techniques during high stress situations on any soft, inanimate object he could get his hands on at the time.

And then of course there is the gunshot wound.

It is by far the biggest, the worst, of all of his scars. It is newer, too. Still an ugly, fleshy pink colour against his tanned skin. The entry wound on his back is smaller than the exit wound on the front of his shoulder above his chest, where the bullet had torn through layers of muscle and tendon and bone and skin as it sliced through his body and exploded out of him. It hadn’t helped that his platoon’s ambush had gone terribly, horribly wrong and he had been the only medical officer left alive, with assistance a long time in coming—if it came at all. Without knowing if he was going to get medical attention, he had treated the wound himself as much as he could. His non-dominant hand had worked over his own torn flesh shakily as he lay in the middle of a dirt street in a sandy desert town. Because of this, the scar is much worse than it should be: infection had set in, working its way through his body with deadly intent. Evidence of just how badly the wound had been infected will forever last in the mother-of-pearl striations of healed flesh that crawl outwards from the scar, like cobwebs creeping across John’s shoulder and down his chest.

Compared to all of Sherlock’s smooth perfection, John feels old and worn out, unworthy of even looking at something as beautiful as the boy.

He trembles above the brunet and tries to pull away from him, away from that penetrating gaze, but Sherlock reaches out to stop him, to keep him close. When John turns back to him, he sees that Sherlock’s eyes are wide, his mouth parted slightly in shock. John thinks about what Sherlock
must be seeing, with his sharp eyes and even sharper mind. He thinks about how awful it must look to the younger male.

John fidgets awkwardly against him, unsure of what to say now, where to go from here. “It’s mostly nerve and joint damage,” he begins uncertainly. “There’s a lot of scar tissue that doesn’t really let me feel much of anything.”

He continues to shift over Sherlock, thinking about what he should say next to cover the uncomfortable silence. Sherlock, however, stuns him into stillness when he lifts himself up into a sitting position, John straddling his lap, and raises his head to kiss the gnarled skin of John’s scar. Despite just telling Sherlock that he can’t really feel anything, the gentle touch against the puckered flesh is strangely electric, sending a shock through John. Sherlock’s lips softly trace over the bumps and ridges of rough scar tissue and then ghost along the raised white striations of skin which had incorrectly healed, needing to be cut and sewn back together again.

Against Sherlock’s lips, John gives an involuntary shudder.

“It’s beautiful, John.” Sherlock’s voice is soft and filled with something that sounds like reverence. John blushes at the boy’s words, at the boy’s gaze, at the boy’s awe. John doesn’t deserve any of it. He doesn’t deserve Sherlock. But Sherlock simply leans forward to kiss John’s scar again, as if to prove that the first time wasn’t a fluke, and he whispers against the torn flesh, “You’re beautiful.”

Something inside John’s throat tightens, burns slightly and prickles at the corners of his eyes. Never once has anyone told him that his scar is beautiful; never once has anyone—Mary included —looked at his scar for so long, so openly, so tenderly. It makes something inside his stomach clench disturbingly and his heart ache where it beats in his chest. No one has ever wanted to touch John’s scarred places so lovingly, and no one has certainly ever spoken about them so reverently. John can’t blame anyone for that, really. He knows that those scarred places are painful and ugly, and it only makes sense for people to want to avoid them. John has always hidden those secret parts of himself away, kept them locked up from the eyes of family and friends. Even Mary. He’s kept everything buried deep down for so long that he hasn’t realised how starved for affection and attention he has become. The thought that someone would want to touch all of the awful parts of him—Sherlock, of all people—cracks open something in his chest and allows him to finally breathe, after what feels like years of strangling. Sherlock’s touch is strange and heart-rending and so, so intimate, and John has never felt more accepted than he does right now, straddling Sherlock as he sits up in John’s bed, his face pressed to John’s ruined shoulder.

Without a word John’s hands pull Sherlock’s face towards his own, desperate to kiss him, to thank him. Their lips meet with a tenderness that John has forgotten he is capable of, that he hasn’t used with anyone in a long time.

When Sherlock finally pulls away from him for air, he doesn’t go very far. His lips stay attached to John’s body and he trails kisses across the man’s chest, over to his arm. John feels a warm tongue dip into the small indentions of the scars there, licking and tasting each one.

For a moment John is startled. He believes that Sherlock is not bothered by the deep cicatrix on his shoulder—that Sherlock is fascinated by it—but for him to feel the same with all of John’s other scars (which are not as new, not as large, not as interesting) is somewhat surprising. Sherlock’s warm little tongue finds its way back to John’s chest and runs along the length of the silvery scalpel scar there, leaving a wet trail behind.

“Sherlock,” he mumbles, dragging the boy’s mouth away from his scars and back towards his own lips, “don’t. You don’t have to keep—”
“I want to,” Sherlock whispers against his mouth, lips wet from the trailing kisses and licks he has lavished across John’s torso. “I want to kiss each one of them, taste them all. You don’t have to be ashamed of them—they brought you here. They brought you to me.”

A soft sound escapes John’s mouth and he pushes Sherlock back down onto the bed and follows him, pressing their lips together harshly because he is afraid that something else, something embarrassing, might claw its way past his throat if his mouth is left unguarded. *God but this boy is a wonder*, John can’t help thinking. Everything about Sherlock, *everything*, surprises John; from how much the teen has captivated him to how much Sherlock is willing to give to John. Because he knows Sherlock will give him everything; Sherlock will give him all that he is. And John knows that he will take it. John will take everything from Sherlock, selfishly, because he wants it just as much as Sherlock wants him to have it. He can’t possibly resist it.

Beneath him, Sherlock’s body trembles as John runs gun-calloused hands all over his soft, naked skin. Sherlock is still heart-stutteringly hard, even after divesting John of his vest and kissing the man’s marred flesh, and his breath is coming in harsher gasps. He is so eager and ready for John, and John feels like he has been waiting a lifetime for Sherlock. There isn’t a reason for either of them to hold off any longer.

John wants desperately to see Sherlock’s face as he fucks him. He wants to watch Sherlock while he spreads him open with his fingers before taking him with his cock, but John knows that isn’t going to be the most comfortable position for Sherlock. So instead John lifts himself off of the brunet and gently rolls him over onto his hands and knees.

“Shoulders down for me, love,” he says softly as he places a hand on Sherlock’s back and pushes lightly, guiding him down. Sherlock goes willingly, not making a sound of complaint, and John’s cock twitches at how pliable his little lover is, how eager. “Let’s see you,” he mumbles, words a low rumble of arousal. When Sherlock falls into place, a small sound of approval escapes John’s lips. “There you are. Such a good boy for me,” he sighs in approval.

For a moment John can do nothing but look down at the vision laid out before him, and his breath catches in his throat.

Sherlock looks so indecent in the position that John has put him in—face pressed against the pillows and arse in the air, legs spread wide at the knees—that John thinks that he will never ever let Sherlock up again. Sherlock’s thighs are sinewy and hard, the tendons showing through as his muscles hold up most of his weight because Sherlock doesn’t have an ounce of fat on him anywhere. His thighs are already starting to tremble, but John thinks it might be from arousal and anticipation more than anything else. He follows the lines of Sherlock’s legs and his eyes drift up to the juncture where they meet at Sherlock’s groin. Sherlock’s cock is hanging thick and heavy in between his thighs, already full despite the fact that John hasn’t even started prepping him yet. There is a tiny bead of precome that sits at the tip of his prick, too small now to drip down onto the bed. John has the overwhelming urge to run his finger through it and smear the liquid around the crown, so he does. Sherlock shudders and John’s finger trails upwards, on the underside of Sherlock’s cock, up and up and up to his wrinkled scrotum. The skin there is tight but not completely drawn up yet; he can still use the boy a bit before Sherlock is ready to come. He rolls Sherlock’s bollocks between his fingers for a second, gently. He wants to kiss the wrinkled skin, so he does that, too, leaning in close and mouthing at the excess flesh, his nose pressed against Sherlock’s perineum.

“*God, John,*” Sherlock murmurs from the pillows, voice breathy already.

John licks up Sherlock’s balls and towards the flat expanse of his perineum, a light blanket of
peach fuzz tickling his lips. He loves the way Sherlock tastes here, so he goes back down and licks his way back up again.

“Fuck,” Sherlock curses on a gasp. He is squirming distractingly, pulling away from the new, strange sensation. John doesn’t want to stop just yet, though. He wants to taste more of Sherlock. So he grips Sherlock’s hips hard and pulls the boy back towards him in a harsh movement. His fingers bite into the soft skin of Sherlock’s hips in warning as he takes one of the brunet’s balls in his mouth, tonguing the crinkled skin and loving the way he can feel it harden and draw up.

“John!” Sherlock cries out, voice breathless and, God, John relishes the way Sherlock says his name when John is making love to him. There is a desperate, pleading tone that comes into Sherlock’s newly deepened voice that drives John absolutely wild.

Eventually John takes mercy on his lover and releases Sherlock’s testicle, gently pushing it out of his mouth and swirling his tongue along the spit-covered skin before licking back up Sherlock’s perineum again, stopping just short of Sherlock’s arsehole. When he gets to that little piece of furled skin, John pulls back slightly, wanting to see. His hands make their way from Sherlock’s hips to his arse cheeks, pulling them apart gently so that he can get a better look and take in all of him.

John had once thought that Sherlock’s most intimate places would look as beautiful as the rest of him, smooth and pink and untouched. And he was right. Sherlock’s skin looks new and fresh, and as John pushes his lover’s cheeks apart and the cool air of the room hits the hot skin, Sherlock’s arsehole clenches suddenly, releasing quickly and opening ever so slightly before closing again. John is mesmerised by the pulse of it, the way it looks, tight and tempting and waiting to be touched.

“John,” he hears Sherlock say from somewhere below him, but he ignores it. He can’t take his eyes off of this part of Sherlock that he has never seen before. There is the finest dusting of hair leading from the tops of Sherlock’s thighs and his perineum up to his arsehole. The hairs are so thin that they are mostly translucent, almost non-existent, and John can only see them when the light hits Sherlock’s body just right, spread open as he is right now.

It is beautiful. *Sherlock* is beautiful, from his head to his toes. He kneels there for John, in front of the man, and lets him look his fill. It is lovely and so very intimate.

“Gorgeous,” John breathes out, speechless.

“John, *please*,” Sherlock whimpers, and John notices for the first time that in his study of Sherlock’s arse, Sherlock has slipped a hand down his own body and his stroking his cock desperately, movements slow and languid. His prick looks so hard; it is stiff and rigid as it hangs away from his tummy, straining in his hand. John boggles at the fact that he has done that to the brunet. *He* has made Sherlock so hard that it looks almost uncomfortable, and John has barely even touched Sherlock’s cock yet. It is the sexiest thing that John has ever seen and his own cock twitches impatiently, eager to be seated deep inside Sherlock’s body.

John moves away from Sherlock slightly, sitting back to give himself the space he needs, and he sucks a finger into his mouth, slicking it liberally with spit. “All right,” he says as he pulls his finger out of his mouth. He licks his lips and he tries not to notice the small tremor in his voice. “All right, I’m going to touch you there now.”

When John swipes his wet finger over the muscle, Sherlock makes a strangled noise in his throat and tries to pull away. John’s fingers clamp down bitingly around the fleshy globes of his arse to try to hold him in place. “Did it hurt?” he asks worryingly, his hands unclenching on Sherlock’s
bum and rubbing soothing circles on the boy’s skin, trying to wipe away the sting of his fingernails.

“No,” Sherlock answers him from below, voice breathy. “It’s just…strange. Very strange. I’ve never felt anything like that…there before.”

John smiles softly at the back of the curly head, even though he knows Sherlock can’t see him. “I know, love,” he says, and his hands rub along Sherlock’s lower back, trying to calm him. “It takes some getting used to. That’s why we’re going slow,” he assures his lover. He refrains from telling Sherlock that the feeling is only going to get stranger. Lubricant will help things along tremendously, he knows. He leans over to the drawer of his bedside table to scrounge around for the small bottle he keeps in there, its contents significantly diminished since starting his relationship with his student.

When he finally finds what he is looking for, he flips the cap and squirts some of the cool, viscous liquid into his hands. He rubs the lube around his fingers, spreading it and letting it warm before brushing against Sherlock’s entrance once more, slicking the outer muscle and making it shine. He wipes as much of the excess lube as he can along the dip of Sherlock’s arse, pushing it gently towards the boy’s hole, where it will be needed shortly. When Sherlock is as wet as John can make him, the man licks his lips nervously, knowing what is going to happen next. “Okay, Sherlock,” he murmurs softly, running his finger through the slick pool of lube that is sitting at the teen’s entrance. “I’m going to put the tip of my finger in,” John tells him. “Just the tip,” he promises.

He begins to dip his middle finger into Sherlock’s body, the lube making everything slippery and soft, and he can’t help being amazed when he slides right into Sherlock up to the first knuckle easily.

“Ngh,” Sherlock gasps out, head jerking up from where it is lying on top of the pillows, the noise sounding strange and inhuman.

“All right?” John asks, concerned. But Sherlock hasn’t told him to stop and the man silently prays that Sherlock is okay with all of this because, God, John doesn’t think he could ever possibly stop at this point.

Sherlock breathes heavily for a moment, squirming slightly as his body adjusts to the feeling of being penetrated for the first time in his life. “It feels…” he whispers lowly. “It feels like I have to…” but he trails off and doesn’t finish his sentence. John can see a blush on his face as one side of it is pressed against the pillows.

“I know, love. It’s okay,” he soothes. It is not a comfortable sensation, he knows, being penetrated this way. The body becomes confused and wants to expel whatever is being pushed into it, and it feels disturbing in the beginning. “Does it hurt?” he asks, because while he knows that this will not be comfortable for Sherlock in the beginning, it shouldn’t be painful.

Sherlock shakes his head minutely. “There’s no pain,” he tells John, voice only slightly shaky. “Just uncomfortable. Can’t describe—” he breaks off with a small gasp when John wiggles the tip of his finger inside of him, closing his eyes and biting his lip.

John stares at the vision below him and marvels at the fact that he has just reduced Sherlock Holmes to sentence fragments and loss of speech with just the tip of his middle finger.

“Amazing,” John breathes out, eyes wide with wonder.
“John,” Sherlock whines from between the pillows, fidgeting against the strange intrusion.

“Do you want more, love?” he asks quietly.

Sherlock huffs out a breath and wiggles under him, his arse moving enticingly. “Yes,” he grits out. And then, “No.” He shakes his head and inhales sharply. “I don’t kno—”

But John knows. He knows exactly what Sherlock wants. He cuts Sherlock’s words off by sliding the rest of his middle finger in, slowly, not pushing too roughly against the natural tightness of Sherlock’s body.

“Oh, fuck!” Sherlock wails, gritting his teeth.

“Hurt?” John asks, stilling his hand as his finger sinks into Sherlock to the hilt, his knuckles pressed up against the fleshy globes of Sherlock’s arse.

Sherlock shakes his head, biting his lip.

John bends over Sherlock’s back as he wiggles his finger inside the teen’s body. He kisses along Sherlock’s spine and the twin dimples on his sacrum, dipping his tongue into them as he waits for Sherlock to grow accustomed to the intrusion.

“You’re doing so well, you’re such a good boy,” he whispers praise against Sherlock’s sweat-slicked skin, lapping at the perspiration. “God, you have no idea how beautiful you are, taking my finger like this.”

Sherlock shudders underneath his lips, around his finger, and John can feel Sherlock’s arse pulse around him, driving him mad. He waits only a few moments longer before his patience runs out.

“Second one now, love,” John tells him, biting softly at the plump flesh of Sherlock’s arse cheek, making him gasp. John draws away from him, sitting up once again, and pulls the globes of Sherlock’s arse apart widely so that the opening of his hole stretches a bit and he can wiggle the tip of his index finger in next to the other. He hears Sherlock whimper at the new addition, but he doesn’t say anything so John pushes his index finger in a little deeper, amazed by the tightness and heat of Sherlock’s body around his digits. Deeper still. Slightly deeper.

“Ahh! S-stop, hurts!” Sherlock cries out, gritting his teeth and digging his fingers into the bedsheets below him, clenching tightly.

John instantly stills but doesn’t pull out.

“Too much,” Sherlock bites out through clenched teeth. “It burns.”

“I know, sweetheart,” John soothes as he rubs his other hand along Sherlock’s torso gently, “but it will get better shortly. Your body just has to get used to the feeling. Once you stretch a bit more the pain should fade.” He pauses before he asks his next question because he doesn’t want to stop, but he knows that if Sherlock doesn’t want to continue, John won’t go any farther. “Do you want me to pull out?” he asks hesitantly.

“No!” Sherlock practically shouts, and his body tenses up as if afraid John won’t listen to him and will pull away. John can feel it in the ring of muscle around his fingers as it clamps down, trying to keep him in.

“Shh. Okay, love. Okay,” he rubs a hand soothingly along Sherlock’s lower back, letting him know he isn’t going anywhere. “Just relax, I need you to relax for me.” John feels the muscle
loosen slightly once again. “Good lad. We’ll just keep it like this until you’re ready to take more, all right? Don’t worry; it’s fine.”

He slowly works the two fingers around the muscle, pulling out and then pushing back in slightly, scissoring them apart and then bringing them back together, sweeping the pads of his fingers along Sherlock’s inner walls in a clockwise motion, feeling all of the boy and loosening him up little by little. When he finally hears what he has been waiting for—small moans and huffs of pleasure instead of soft whimpers of pain—he pushes his fingers in the last little bit, searching, feeling for—

“Fuck!” Sherlock shouts, his body bucking. John grins and uses his other hand to hold onto Sherlock’s hip, keeping him from pulling away.

“Like that, did you?” he asks, voice deepening in arousal as Sherlock writhes under him. He watches Sherlock’s sides heave as the brunet tries to control the intense spikes of arousal that jolt through his body as John glides his fingers over and around the small bundle of nerves inside of him.

Sherlock’s mouth falls open as John works him loose and his breath comes in great heaving pants. His hand has stilled on his own cock, fingers clenching and unclenching around the red, rigid flesh.

“Keep touching yourself, sweetheart,” John reminds him as he scissors his fingers wider, trying to prepare Sherlock for another soon. “I want to watch you.”

“Can’t,” Sherlock bites out. He drops his hand away from his cock and instead brings it up to clench in the sheets along with its twin. His prick bobs obscenely as it stiffly hangs away from his body, twitching every time John makes a pass over his prostate. “I’ll come,” he pants out.

“Don’t…want to yet.”

John groans at the thought that he is taking Sherlock apart so deeply that the boy could come just from John’s fingers in his arse and a few strokes to his cock alone. He loves how responsive and sensitive Sherlock is, but he doesn’t want this to be over too soon, so he makes a conscious effort to rein himself in. He stills his fingers inside of Sherlock and eases off of his prostate, focusing instead on stretching Sherlock as much as he can.

He eventually manages to squeeze a third finger into the tightly stretched hole, watching in wonder as Sherlock’s arse clenches and grips around him. He’s never seen anything more mesmerising than the teen’s body taking him in, and he realises that his breaths are coming in harsh pants just like Sherlock’s below him. He feels like he can do this forever, like John will never get enough of watching him. He could come just from this, just from fingering Sherlock. He could probably milk the boy for hours, make Sherlock so out of his mind that he—

“John.”

Sherlock’s voice suddenly cuts through his train of thought, ragged and completely wrecked. He is panting heavily, hands scrabbling at the sheets as John mercilessly pushes three fingers as deep into his body as they can go, just to see how far Sherlock can take him. “John, I can’t wait any longer. Please. Please say that I’m ready.”

“Yeah,” John responds dazedly, licking his lips and shaking his head to bring himself back to the moment. “Yeah, darling. You’re ready for me.”

He pulls his fingers out of the tight passage with a strange squelching noise from the lubricant and stares in wonder as Sherlock’s hole gapes obscenely for a moment before closing in on itself slowly. The skin around Sherlock’s entrance is no longer shiny and slick—John has been fingering
him for so long that the lubricant has all but disappeared and will have to be reapplied. John does so quickly, spreading cool wetness all around Sherlock’s arsehole and wiping the excess off on his own throbbing prick.

When he’s finished slicking them both up again, he reaches out with both hands to grip Sherlock by the hips and drag him down the bed slightly, positioning him so that John’s cock lines up with his entrance. Seeing the tip of his prick so close to Sherlock’s arsehole makes the engorged, red flesh of his shaft twitch impatiently, and John realises that he has stayed hard the entire time that he has prepared Sherlock, the pill in his system never once flagging.

As John stares down at their bodies, he decides that he likes the look of his hard cock next to Sherlock’s upturned arse, so he savours it for a little while longer. He rubs his prick up and down the valley between Sherlock’s arse cheeks, the head dipping down to drag across his hole as John ruts in between Sherlock’s cheeks without penetrating him. John’s thick cock sits perfectly in the crevice between the globes of Sherlock’s arse, and he loves the way that the head catches on the rim of Sherlock’s loosened entrance as he passes over it before the lube makes it slide smoothly past.

“John!” Sherlock pleads once more, pushing back against John’s body as the man thrusts, meeting his harsh pushes. “Please.” The word is all but sobbed out, and John finally takes pity on him.

He stills his hips and brings one hand away from his grip on Sherlock’s waist to hold onto his cock and guide it to Sherlock’s hole. John releases a shaky breath that he didn’t realise he had been holding and rubs against Sherlock’s rim, not pushing inside yet.

“I’m going to take you now, Sherlock,” John whispers to him, bending down low one more time to place a soft kiss to the top of Sherlock’s spine. He lets his lips linger near the boy’s ear as he breathes out, “And I’m going to keep you with me, always.”

“Yes,” Sherlock pants, eyes screwed shut tightly and fingers flexing around the sheets. “Yes, John. Please.”

John rises back up into a kneeling position behind Sherlock so that the angle is as comfortable for the teen as he can make it, and he presses his hips forward ever so slightly, the tip of his cock breaching Sherlock’s body finally.

God, he can’t believe how tight Sherlock is, even after John has prepped him so extensively. The head of John’s cock is barely inside of the teen and Sherlock is grimacing and squirming underneath him. John bites his lip and realises that he can’t push forward anymore without risking pain to Sherlock; the younger male has tensed up too much in the span of only a few seconds.

With his free hand, John rubs along Sherlock’s torso, across his back, then dips down to grasp his cock, still hard but flagging somewhat. “Bear down, love, open up for me,” John tells him. He slides his fingers through the wetness sitting at the tip of Sherlock’s prick, running the pad of a slick finger along Sherlock’s sensitive frenulum. Beneath him Sherlock gasps in pleasure and unclenches slightly, and John can feel himself sink into the teen just a little bit more.

“There you go,” he praises Sherlock, wanking him slowly with one hand while his other moves to grip the teen’s slim waist, keeping him from squirming and dislodging John. “Good boy, my wonderful boy,” he whispers. “You’re doing so well.”

As he continues to wank Sherlock, the brunet’s body opens up for him in increments, allowing him deeper slowly, hesitantly. The head of John’s cock slides in completely, but he knows the next part will be the hardest—John is thickest right past the crown of his prick, but he tapers down a bit
towards the base of his penis. So he pushes gently against the resistance of Sherlock’s body, slowly, letting Sherlock accept him naturally.

Sherlock gasps and bites his lip but he keeps bearing down on John. Finally the widest part of him slips past Sherlock’s entrance and John almost bottoms out inside of the teen quickly, nearly falling forward as he lodges his hips against Sherlock’s arse. He stops himself from pushing inside completely, though, worried that Sherlock won’t be able to take him all, but that doesn’t stop his mind from going frighteningly blank for a moment at the feel of being surrounded completely by Sherlock at last.

It is tight and heat and wet and they fit together so perfectly that it is literally breath-taking. It is two halves finally becoming a whole. It is finding a soul mate. It is a reparation. It is perfection. It is coming home.

It is everything that John has never had his entire life.

“God, Sherlock,” he pants out, because there are no other words. “God.”

Sherlock huffs chokingly between the pillows and squirms around on the cock that is impaling him, and John bites back a gasp against the sensation. He had wanted to be patient, to wait a moment, to give Sherlock time to adjust to the feel of him. But he can feel Sherlock’s muscles fluttering around his cock, can feel himself throb sympathetically along with the slight clenches of Sherlock’s arse and he has to, he just has to move.

He starts off gently, thrusting slowly. He pulls back even slower and Sherlock moans against the sheets, turning his face into them and biting at the covers.

“Jesus,” John breathes as he watches the boy while he fucks him slowly. He is surrounded by Sherlock, covered in him, drowning in him, and it’s the most amazing thing he has ever felt in his life. “Christ, you’re tight, love,” he informs the brunet beneath him as he thrusts leisurely into Sherlock again, dragging his cock out in a slow pace that is driving both he and Sherlock mad. “You feel amazing. Absolutely perfect.”

He sets a steady rhythm, fucking into Sherlock gently, slowly. All the while he watches Sherlock’s face as he tries to hide between the pillows under his head, the most endearing blush staining his cheeks and neck and shoulders as John takes him apart completely. John suddenly has the strongest urge to put his lips on Sherlock, anywhere; he just wants to be connected to Sherlock at two points, a complete circle. So John leans forward to press hot, wet kisses to the only part of Sherlock he can reach with his cock lodged firmly inside of him—the flat space between his shoulder blades. The change in angle makes Sherlock cry out and his cock pulses in John’s hand as his muscles clench down around John involuntarily.

John grins and thrusts again, loving the strangled little noises Sherlock is making as the man assaults his prostate.

“Found it then, did we?” John asks, meaning it to sound snarky but the question ends in a groan as John can’t help thrusting harder into him. Sherlock can’t answer. He seems to have lost the ability to form words as he buries his face in the pillows and cries out in pleasure at every thrust John makes.

“God, you’re so lovely like this, you know that?” John asks him again, even though he knows Sherlock won’t answer. It doesn’t matter; he knows Sherlock hears him. He knows Sherlock loves listening to John talk to him while they have sex, so he continues to speak, his words punctuated by winded puffs of air and gasping breaths. “You’re the most gorgeous thing I’ve ever
I want to fuck you forever. I don’t ever want to stop.” Sherlock moans under him as John angles his thrusts to be sure to hit the boy’s prostate every time, and his hand clamps down on Sherlock’s cock as it slides through his fingers. “Fuck, I can feel you getting harder, love,” he groans out. “Are you getting close?”

The pill has already proven itself to work wonders for him, but John knows that he isn’t going to last much longer. The tight heat of Sherlock around him is too much, the indecent noises John is fucking out of him are even more so, and he can feel his orgasm coiling deep in his belly, warming his body and drawing his balls up tight.

“Yes,” Sherlock finally manages to sob out, one hand moving hastily down to join John’s as he wanks the boy faster. Their fingers intertwine and Sherlock lets out a shout as he clamps his hand down around John’s, tightening the man’s grip on his cock. John watches in wonder as his lover comes apart underneath him, around him, for him, and then there is a warm wetness slicking his hand, making his grip slippery.

“Fuck,” Sherlock gasps as his orgasm crashes over him. John can see his shoulders shake incrementally and Sherlock’s body sags just slightly, worn out and used up, his hand barely gripping John’s now as the man continues to pull at Sherlock’s softening cock. “Fuck, fuck, fuck,” the boy whispers, sensitive now that he has climaxed. John continues to thrust into him, though, the head of his cock pressing into Sherlock’s prostate on each pass.

Sherlock whines lowly at the sensation and clenches his arse around John once, harshly, and that is it; John is lost, John is falling but doesn’t know it because it feels just like flying, like soaring, like burning up in the sun. His orgasm lights through him like gunpowder being ignited, like a fuse being lit, and he is on fire. He comes inside of Sherlock, pushing deeply into the boy’s body so that he is sheathed in warmth as his cock pulses out spurt after spurt, and Sherlock moans softly at the sensation of being filled.

“I love you,” John gasps out as he sags forward, drained from the intensity of his orgasm. He manages to keep himself from crushing Sherlock underneath him—albeit barely—on shaking arms, but he drops his head down to Sherlock’s back, kissing anywhere he can reach and pressing his sweaty skin against Sherlock’s shoulders. “God, I fucking love you.”

Below him, Sherlock’s body seems to have given out as well because he drops his hips to the mattress, pulling John out of him in a sudden rush of cold air hitting his wet cock. John looks down the length of their bodies and notices that Sherlock is lying directly on top of the rather large wet spot created by his own orgasm. He is sure that another wet spot will be growing soon, if Sherlock doesn’t get up to clean himself off before come leaks out of his arse.

John can’t seem to bring himself to care. He looks down at the beautiful mess that he has made of Sherlock, and his heart constricts in his chest.

It must be unhealthy, he thinks, to feel this way about anyone.

He huffs out a giddy little laugh and falls to the mattress, twisting onto his back beside Sherlock. He’s smiling like an idiot and he’s ridiculously in love and John can’t remember a better moment in his whole life.

“Christ, Sherlock,” he says, still trying to catch his breath. “That was…” he searches for the words and finds that he doesn’t know what it is he is trying to say. Still, he needs to tell Sherlock how amazing he feels, he has to let the boy know just what Sherlock does to him. “I’ve never come like that before,” he tells the brunet, looking over at him. Sherlock looks sated, shagged out. His hair is a complete mess and his skin is still pink from his post-orgasmic afterglow. “Never in my life.
“Not with anyone.”

“Not even Mary?” Sherlock asks, and he isn’t looking at John as he lies next to the man. His eyes are downcast and his fingers are playing with the corner of one of the pillowcases.

John sighs, because he wishes that Sherlock would stop comparing himself to Mary and his marriage, stop feeling inadequate. He reaches an arm out to pull Sherlock towards him, hugging him close. Sherlock goes willingly enough, turning onto his back and snuggling into the sweat-damp skin of John’s bad shoulder. “No, Sherlock,” he answers the boy evenly, truthfully. “Not even with Mary. Just you. Only you.”

A quiet settles over them, and John feels as if Sherlock is waiting for him to say something else. He isn’t exactly sure what it is he is supposed to be saying, but when he opens his mouth he finds that the words are already there on the tip of his tongue.

“I loved Mary, I really did, but it wasn’t ever like this with her,” he says, rubbing his gun-worn hand up and down Sherlock’s thin, frail-feeling arm. “It’s never been close to anything that I’ve felt for you, even before now. Ever.”

Sherlock looks at him then, eyes big and bright in the mid-morning sun. The post-orgasmic blush is still faintly painting his cheeks and he blinks up at John, head tilting on the man’s shoulder. “What does it feel like, then?” he asks quietly, as if he is unsure that he wants to voice that question.

“What?” John asks, confused for a second by Sherlock’s bluntness. But then he realises what is going on in the next instant; he sometimes still forgets how low the teen’s self-esteem is and how vulnerable Sherlock can be.

“I want to know how it feels for you,” Sherlock explains, bringing a hand up to comb through John’s coarse, dark blond chest hair, sparse as it is. “I want to know what it’s like. I need to know.”

“I feel like I’m being burned alive. Like I’m on fire,” he says finally, and he is surprised to hear his voice shake slightly. But he just holds Sherlock tighter and forges on. “I’m constantly scared that you’ll decide to leave me, but I’m scared that you’ll decide you won’t, too. I’m scared to touch you, because I might find out that you aren’t real after all, and I’m scared that if I do touch you and I find out that you are real, you’ll burn me up, set fire to everything that I am. I’d give it all up for you, Sherlock, and I’m terrified that you won’t want me to.” He stops and shakes his head because he thinks that he isn’t making any sense, stating all of these contrary things, but it’s how he feels, and he can’t really explain it any better. “You drive me out of my mind. I’m completely gone on you. I love you so much I can’t even think straight sometimes. I want you constantly, all the time. I never stop thinking about you. You’re the first thought in my head when I wake up in the morning, you’re the last thought I have before I fall asleep at night, and you’re every single thought I have in between. I want to be with you every second of every day and I want you to want me, too. I love you like I’ve never loved anyone before in my life.” He lets out a sigh, a confused puff of air that deflates his chest a little bit. “It feels like I’m going mad, that’s how it feels, all right? Like it’s too much and not enough at the same time.” He shakes his head, out of words now. “Mad,” he repeats softly, going quiet.

He stares down at the young man he is holding, looking into beautifully clear, sea-foam green eyes. He thinks Sherlock looks like an angel right now and suddenly “love” seems like too trivial a
term for what he feels; it is all-consuming, obsessive, and barely on the right side of sane.

“John,” Sherlock breathes out, eyes wide with wonder. He doesn’t seem to know what to say for once, but of course he tries anyway. “I…I don’t….”

Sherlock trails off and begins to look distinctly uncomfortable, because he has never been overly vocal about his feelings. Sherlock is rather reserved when it comes to stating his emotions; he doesn’t say “I love you” nearly as much as John does, but the older man is okay with that. He knows that Sherlock loves him, he can feel it whenever the boy is near. So John takes pity on him once again and interrupts his attempt at a response.

“I never thought I had any more to give anyone, Sherlock. I didn’t think there was anything left,” he whispers to the teen as he presses a kiss to Sherlock’s forehead, on top of frizzy fringe. “But I’ll give you all that I have. I’ll give you everything I’ve got to give.” He trails kisses down to Sherlock’s lips and spends a small eternity learning the taste of the boy after he has been fucked. “It’s all for you,” he mumbles softly against Sherlock’s swollen and slick mouth.

When their kisses taper off, Sherlock looks up at him, and John knows there is still something he wants to say, so he waits patiently for Sherlock. He’d wait forever, if he had to.

“John, I….,” He trails off, bites his reddened lip, then tries again. “Thank you,” he finishes simply, and John can’t help it—he beams down at the boy.

“Come on, then,” he says suddenly, giving Sherlock’s shoulders a quick squeeze and then rolling away from him, off of the bed. He doesn’t want to; he wants to stay under the sheets all day with Sherlock, now that he finally has the chance. But he knows that the bedclothes are filthy and that their bodies are probably worse, and as much as he wants to lie next to Sherlock for hours after an amazing shag, he also wants to be comfortable. So a wash it is, then.

John helps him up out of bed, wrapping an arm around Sherlock’s thin frame. The brunet grimaces slightly at something that John can only imagine is a twinge of pain, and the man presses apologetic kisses all over Sherlock’s face. In the loo, he draws Sherlock a warm bath, helping him sink down into the tub slowly. John kneels down next to the porcelain, soaping up a flannel and washing his lover carefully. He is sure to wipe at all of the crusting semen Sherlock is inexplicably covered in (it will never cease to amaze John how he always manages to get it everywhere). Then he uses gentle fingers to clean all of the boy’s crevices, washing away any evidence of what just transpired between them.

John lets him linger in the tub, soaking for a moment, while he goes back out to the bedroom and changes the bedclothes. For the time, he simply drags the sheets off of the mattress, throwing them into one corner of the room and tossing on another sheet and duvet. He’ll worry about doing the laundry later; he has a feeling those aren’t the only sheets they will be ruined this weekend.

When he is done with the bed, John makes his way back into the en suite and helps Sherlock out of the tub, draining it of water and wrapping the boy up in a large fluffy towel which he pulls from the linen cupboard. They don’t speak—haven’t done since John led Sherlock into the tub—but John finds that the silence is comfortable, caring. Sherlock is pliant underneath his fingers as John rubs him dry, his skin warm from the bath and his hands reaching for John. John lets him reach, because he can’t stop touching Sherlock, either. While he dries him, John trails kisses along each piece of skin he uncovers. He nuzzles Sherlock’s neck and presses chapped lips just below Sherlock’s ear, into the crooks of Sherlock’s limbs, and against the flat planes of his damp skin.

It is the most intimate thing he has ever done with anyone after sex.
When Sherlock is dry, John smiles softly at him, eyes crinkling, and tells him to go lie down and wait for him while John washes himself up. Sherlock blushes and looks down at the ground, biting his lip in a way that fills John with tender affection, and then turns to walk naked into the bedroom, closing the bathroom door behind him.

John grins goofily at him as he watches Sherlock leave. His smile doesn’t once falter while he steps under the spray of the showerhead, the water tepid after Sherlock’s hot bath.

He washes quickly, intent on jumping back into bed with his lover and spending as much time there as possible. He runs a dry towel over his body haphazardly, leaving damp skin behind, but he hardly cares. He tosses the towel down to the floor and wrenches the bathroom door open and steps into the bedroom, only to stop dead in his tracks.

As soon as he walks out of the bathroom, he instantly smells the acrid scent of a cigarette. His gaze darts immediately over to Sherlock, completely flabbergasted. The prat hasn’t even opened a window; he sits on John’s bed with a lit cigarette in his mouth that is dropping tiny pieces of crumbly ash onto the clean duvet as he checks his phone and mumbles something under his breath, making the cigarette bob up and down.

“Sherlock!” he shouts out, lunging forward and ripping the cigarette from the boy’s mouth. It isn’t the smartest move, he realises. The rest of the delicate ash that had been sitting precariously at the tip of the cigarette crumbles over the bedspread, but he doesn’t care. He stalks across his bedroom, cancer stick in hand, and wrenches his window open, stubbing the cigarette out on the sill before throwing it to the ground outside. “For the love of God!”

“I ran out of patches over the week,” is all Sherlock says, sitting naked on John’s bed with his knees drawn up to his chest, arms wrapped around his legs.

John sighs and shakes his head, making his way to his closet where he digs down towards the back and finds what he is looking for: an emergency stash of nicotine patches that he keeps in case he doesn’t have the chance to stop by the shops on his way to see Sherlock. “Here, you git,” he says, tossing the pack to Sherlock. “It’s going to be hell getting the smell out of the room, I hope you know.”

John tries to ignore the smirk that he sees playing at the corner of Sherlock’s lips as he tears into the box and slaps a patch on the smooth, pale skin of his arm. “It might air out by Sunday night,” Sherlock says simply, unconcerned.

John thinks it’s doubtful but doesn’t say anything else about it. He just walks tiredly back across the room and falls into the bed next to Sherlock. He settles in on his regular side of the mattress and pulls the covers up over himself, face turned towards Sherlock.

Sherlock’s eyes follow him, clear and bright and questioning, as if he wants to ask John something. He doesn’t, though, and the man simply raises an arm and beckons the brunet down to lie next to him.

Sherlock goes readily.

They lie like that for a long moment, John basking in the silence of the house around him and the soft breaths of Sherlock next to him. It is warm and comfortable with the late-morning sun shining down on them through the unshuttered window, and he feels himself relaxing deeply. Just as he is drifting off to sleep, Sherlock speaks next to him.

“Where did you get them?” he asks John softly, rubbing the tips of his fingers over the raised welts
of the man’s scars.

“Here and there,” John says ambiguously, tone sleepy and languid. There are too many marks on his body to tell Sherlock about each and every one of them. Some of the stories aren’t terribly interesting, anyways.

“Do you ever wish you didn’t have them?” Sherlock continues, dragging his nails softly along the edge of a particularly deep scar, making John shiver.

“No, not at all,” John answers truthfully. “I’d never wish that.”

“Why not?”

John thinks for a moment. He may hate his scars, hate how they mar his body, making him look and feel decades older than he already is, but he has never once wished that he could take any of them back. Even the gunshot wound that invalided him home.

“Because they remind me that the past is real,” he finally answers Sherlock, voice quiet in the stillness of the bedroom. “I’ve learned something from each one of them. Every lesson, every battle, forms a new scar. When I look at them, I see how far I’ve come. I never thought I’d make it here, Sherlock, to this point in my life. To you.” He turns his head to look down at the boy, placing a kiss on Sherlock’s smooth forehead. “You’re right. What you said earlier, I mean. My scars don’t matter anymore, because they gave me to you.” He tightens his hold on Sherlock and feels the boy burrow into him for a moment, a content, sleepy sigh escaping his lips.

“Come on, love,” he says, turning over, trying to stay connected to Sherlock still. “Let’s sleep.”

Sherlock puts up no protest and John is in fact surprised to find that, only a few minutes later, he has fallen into a deep slumber, small little snuffles emanating from his nose. John chuckles because he never once thought that Sherlock Holmes would be a snorer, and he settles more comfortably into the sheets surrounding them.

Sleeping like this with Sherlock, wrapped around him tightly in his bed, feels right. John feels complete in a way he hasn’t for years. Too many years. He never wants this moment to end. He wishes like hell that the weekend could last forever. But he sighs sadly because he knows that nothing can stop Sunday night from coming around, no matter how much he doesn’t want it to.

With one more kiss to the soft skin of Sherlock’s neck for the morning, John fits himself closer around the curve of Sherlock’s long, lean body and feels like he has never belonged anywhere more in his life.

He feels like he’s home.

*

They doze. After a few hours they awaken, stomachs grumbling. They forage in the kitchen for something to eat, but find that neither one of them really knows how to cook much of anything. So they decide to order in.

They spend the evening eating Chinese in bed, smiling and joking with one another. The conversation between them is easy, both of them completely content to be sitting next to one another, eating dinner at an hour that they don’t ever get to spend together. John’s heart feels like it is close to bursting with happiness as he watches Sherlock pick at his food with chopsticks. He wishes that they could have sex again. The Viagra is still in his system and it is setting a fire deep in his belly as he watches Sherlock’s sharp, pink tongue dart out to lick sauce from the corners of
his plush mouth. But Sherlock is still slightly sore from earlier, and so John settles for using his hands and his mouth, taking Sherlock apart slowly underneath him as their food goes cold on the bedside tables.

They fall asleep again under the cover of darkness, sticky and sated. They are warm and wrapped up in each other, Sherlock’s legs tangling around his own like a lanky teenage octopus. John drifts off to slumber with a huge smile on his face, knowing that he is about to sleep through his first night with his lover next to him and that Sherlock will still be beside him when John wakes up in the morning.

He thinks that he won’t have any problems sleeping through the night, but John is proven wrong when he jolts awake at what must be an ungodly hour.

He feels eyes on him, his soldier’s instincts screaming. The room is dark, but the full moon shines in through the window that he forgot to shutter earlier in the day when he threw Sherlock’s cigarette out. He lets his gaze rove over the shadows surrounding him as he lies still silently, trying to gauge the situation.

He needn’t have worried, he comes to find. His eyes land on Sherlock, sitting up next to him in bed, staring at him with irises glittering in the darkness.

John sighs and brings a hand up to scrub the sleep from his face, relaxing instantly. “Have you been up all night?” he asks without preamble.

Sherlock lets out a small noise of affirmation. “I’ve been cataloguing,” he says simply, as if that explains everything.

“You. What we did this morning. This, right now. I don’t want to forget it, so I’m storing it in my mind palace.”

John’s frown deepens. “Your what?”

“My mind palace,” he repeats. John knows how much Sherlock hates repeating himself, but he is so relaxed at the moment that he doesn’t even complain about how slow John is being. “It’s a memorisation technique. I can access any memory, from any time, by categorising them and storing them into the proper rooms in my mind,” Sherlock explains, looking down calmly at the man lying beside him. “As long as it’s in my mind palace, I can’t forget anything. And I don’t want to forget today.”

John stares at Sherlock in wonder, at a loss for words momentarily. “You’re amazing, you know that? I’ve never met anyone who thinks like you do, who can do the things that you can.” He reaches out an arm and drags Sherlock back down, halfway on top of him, kissing him soundly.

“Sleep, Sherlock. You need to sleep,” he whispers against the boy’s mouth. “Come on. Sleep with me, please? I want you to lay here in my arms. I want to know what it feels like to have you fall asleep with me in my bed, and wake up with you still here with me in the morning.”

“Yes,” Sherlock whispers back, lips pressed softly to John’s neck, breath hot and moist against the sensitive skin. “I want that, too, John. More than anything.”

They fall peacefully asleep a few minutes later, tangled up in one another.
They wake up still tangled in each other.

Sherlock’s arms are heavy and hot around him, there is a leg thrown over the lower half of John’s body, a knee jammed into his kidney uncomfortably, and toes digging into one of his thighs. He doesn’t even know how that’s possible. Does the kid have an extra limb or something? John wiggles about, trying to get comfortable but not willing to move Sherlock off of him. He rather likes being smooshed by a brilliant teenage genius. As he moves he hears Sherlock snort beside him, and the boy fidgets in his sleep as he fits himself impossibly closer to the curve of John’s body, his lanky arm tightening. Sherlock is outright spooning him now and it shouldn’t be a big deal but it is. Because John has never been held, cuddled, like this before in his life. Mary had always wanted to be the one who was held, the one who was comforted, the one who was snuggled at night as they lay next to each other. John has always figured that as a man it is his job to give cuddles, not receive them. And Mary has never offered. But this is…nice. Warm. Comforting. Within the burning, sleepy circle of Sherlock’s arms John feels held and safe and cherished in a way he has never felt before. He never wants either of them to move again.

But the wholly uncomfortable sensation of a full bladder makes that more than impossible, so he sighs and brings a hand up to wake the boy.

“Sherlock,” he whispers, shaking the sleeping teen. “Wake up, love.”

“Don’ wanna,” is the drowsy, slurred reply.

John huffs out a small laugh. “You have to, darling.”

“Why?” Sherlock complains, eyes still closed.

“Because I need the loo and your knee is pressing into my bladder,” John states rather matter-of-factly.

Sherlock huffs in irritation but releases John from his grasp.

John practically races to the bathroom, stooping to grab some clothes up from the floor where they had been discarded the night before. When he is done with the toilet he dresses and washes up,
looking at himself in the mirror above the sink before he leaves.

He wonders if he should look any different, if other people will be able to tell just by gazing at his face that he has spent the past day cheating on his wife and fucking his student in their bed. The face in the mirror frowns at him and he suddenly doesn’t like what he sees very much, so he turns away and heads for the door.

When he exits the bathroom he finds an underwear-clad Sherlock inside of his closet. Sherlock is digging through a box that has been shoved into a corner, one that John hasn’t gotten around to unpacking yet since the move. It isn’t anything important; just old clothes that probably don’t fit him anymore and some stuff from university that he is too sentimental to get rid of.

When Sherlock hears him come back into the bedroom, he straightens up and turns to John, his bright gaze raking down John’s frame and staying for a second longer than is decent.

“What?” John asks, looking down at himself self-consciously. He wonders if he grabbed up a pair of dirty boxers, checking his pants to be sure they are clean. Or maybe his short-sleeved shirt is on inside out?


“Without all of your stuffy tucked-in shirts and those frumpy old-man cardigans,” Sherlock elaborates. “You look so much younger. Handsome. Extremely handsome.” Sherlock’s blush deepens suddenly at the realisation that he has spoken those words out loud, and John can’t help the wide grin that graces his face. He isn’t used to anyone calling him handsome and it is very flattering.

However, Sherlock turns back to rummaging through the box before John can say anything about it. “What’s this?” he asks, holding up something limp and maroon. John knows that it is a pathetic ploy at changing the topic of conversation but he decides to let it go, just this once.

John looks at the thing in Sherlock’s hand but can’t tell what it is until he steps closer to the teen and Sherlock unfolds it, letting him see the faded logo on the front. “Oh, that’s my old jersey from when I played rugby at uni,” he says with a grin that slowly turns into a nostalgic smile. “I haven’t seen that thing in ages. Come on, love—get dressed and meet me downstairs so that we can eat.”

He gives Sherlock a quick kiss to the crown of his head, on top of sleep-mussed, unruly curls. Then he walks out of the room and down the stairs to the kitchen.

As John searches his cupboards for something halfway edible, he notices that he can’t stop grinning. He is happy and completely relaxed in a way that he has not been in many years, all of his cares and worries seeming to have floated away during the night. He finally finds a few tins of beans pushed to the back of a shelf and decides that it will have to be that and toast for breakfast. As a contingency plan, John pulls out a few different jars of jam and marmalade from the fridge and sets everything on the kitchen table, not sure exactly what Sherlock likes on his bread. John hopes they can make a half-way decent meal, at least, out of the poor supplies he’s been able to scrounge up.

At that moment he hears Sherlock coming down the stairs and towards the kitchen. “I hope you don’t mind toast,” John tells the air as he speaks to Sherlock with his back to him, turning as he talks. “That’s all I could—”
He stops short as his eyes land on Sherlock standing in the doorway to the kitchen. His mind goes fuzzy and blank for a moment, the tins of beans forgotten in his hands. Sherlock stares back at John, blushing profusely as he lets the man take in the sight of him.

He didn’t try to do a thing with his hair and the curls still look as if a wild animal has nested in them during the night. John follows the long, pale line of Sherlock’s neck down to the open collar of the shirt that he is wearing, then down to the maroon peaked nipples that John can see through the thin material of his old rugby jersey. His eyes fall farther still, down the flat plane of Sherlock’s stomach and to the hem of the shirt. It is slightly too long on Sherlock’s body and he comes down to the tops of Sherlock’s pale thighs. Peeking out just below the hem of the shirt, at the secret juncture where thighs meet groin, John can see the bottoms of Sherlock’s pants. The thin white cotton material of his y-fronts cradle Sherlock’s delicate-looking balls gently, cupping the rounded flesh. He looks heart-breakingly endearing, John thinks once his brain kicks back online.

The jersey isn’t meant to be quite as long as it is on him. Although Sherlock is now a few good centimetres taller than John thanks to his latest growth spurt—taller even than most teens his age—Sherlock’s height is mostly all in his legs right now. His torso hasn’t quite caught up to his limbs yet.

Finally becoming somewhat uncomfortable under John’s intense, silent gaze, Sherlock speaks up. He plays with the hem of the shirt nervously as he talks, looking much too young and shy and arousingly adorable for his own good at the moment.

“I like it,” he says lowly, verdigris eyes gleaming wickedly. “You wore it so much that now it’s soft to the touch. I bet you don’t even remember how comfortable the material is,” he tells John with a devilish smile. The wicked twist of his full pink lips makes something in John’s belly tighten and coil alarmingly. “Would you like to feel it?” he asks innocently, and he pretends that he doesn’t know that he is offering his body up to John rather lasciviously for someone who was a virgin less than twenty-four hours ago.

Without another thought John drops the tins of beans on the table as he pounces on Sherlock, unable to keep his hands and his lips to himself once they come into contact with the brunet. Sherlock looks disturbingly young right now and John feels slightly disgusted with himself when all he can think about is fucking the boy senseless. But as his cock fills out inside his pants it drains away all of the guilt, and all that John is left with are feelings of desire, and want, and need.

He presses Sherlock up against the doorframe, his hips pinning the slimmer body under him and grinding down. Against his mouth, Sherlock gasps and John deepens the kiss. Their tongues slide against one another’s as John’s hands come up to pinch and tweak at Sherlock’s nipples through his old jersey, making them grow hard while he pulls desperate little noises out of Sherlock’s throat.

Sherlock meets John’s thrusts eagerly, his hands tangling in John’s hair and keeping their mouths smashed messily together. But just as John grinds his half-hard prick against Sherlock’s own burgeoning erection, the sound of Sherlock’s stomach grumbling hungrily stops him in his tracks. John’s mouth stills on Sherlock’s and his eyes shoot open in surprise while Sherlock’s open in anger.

“Don’t stop—why have you stopped?” Sherlock asks him, voice bordering on a whine.

“You’re hungry,” John states, as if it should be obvious (which it should) while he moves away from Sherlock.

“No, I’m not,” Sherlock argues, trying to pull John back against him.
“Then what was that?” John chuckles as he lets Sherlock bring them back together, avoiding the teen’s searching lips but planting a kiss on the tip of Sherlock’s nose instead.

Sherlock’s face scrunches up at his nose-kiss. “What was what?”

“That noise,” John tells him, exasperated. He knows that Sherlock knows what he is talking about and is just playing at being dense.

“It was nothing,” Sherlock tries to brush it off, tilting his head up for another kiss, which John skillfully avoids.

“It was your stomach telling you it’s starving,” John stresses, and although his lips may have avoided Sherlock’s successfully, John’s neck isn’t so lucky. “You didn’t eat a lot last night; you must be famished by now,” he continues, trying to distract Sherlock—and himself—and remind them why they should be eating breakfast instead of snogging in the kitchen. He knows that Sherlock rarely eats large meals, but John figures he must be hungry. He hadn’t finished his dinner last night and John wants to be sure that Sherlock is taken care of this weekend, spoiled rotten if he wants to be. This is the first time they have been able to spend so much time together and John wants to take advantage of it, caring for Sherlock as much as he can.

Sherlock hums against the sensitive skin of his neck, biting down gently and making John shiver. “No, I want to do more of this.”

John can’t help it—he laughs, the sound full of delight and happiness. It has been a long time since someone has wanted him this way, this badly, and he can’t deny that the feeling is heady, wonderful. But he has to be sure that Sherlock is taken care of. Someone has to; God knows Sherlock won’t take care of himself. “We still have all weekend to do this, love,” he says, and although he pushes Sherlock away gently, his voice is a bit breathless and his cock is a bit stiff. He ignores it, though. “Come on; I need nourishment, too, if I’m to keep up with you. We’ll eat and then I’ll take you back to bed,” he says, placing a kiss on the crown of Sherlock’s head before pulling away from him and turning his attention back to their meagre breakfast.

Sherlock follows him the rest of the way into the kitchen and comes to stand beside him by the table. Then he bites his bottom lip and for one second looks almost as if he is unsure. “Promise?” he asks the man quietly, his fingers playing nervously with the bottom hem of John’s rugby jersey. His glass-green gaze doesn’t quite meet John’s.

John keeps forgetting, because Sherlock is so confident, so self-assured in all other aspects of his life, that he is painfully self-conscious about their relationship. It was why he thought for the longest time that John hadn’t wanted to have penetrative sex with him. And now John can see that worry come back; that fear that John is rejecting him, that John is unhappy with what they did yesterday and doesn’t want to do it again.

John doesn’t know how Sherlock can be so bloody brilliant and such an amazing idiot at the same time.

“Yes,” John says quietly, reaching a tentative hand out to caress Sherlock’s cheek. The brunet leans into his touch like a cat. “Yes, of course, love. I’ll take you back to bed gladly. Nothing would make me happier. But only if you eat,” he finishes with a smile.

Sherlock returns his smile with a shy one of his own. “Fine,” he finally concedes, and John feels as though he’s won an epic victory. “I’ll have a piece of toast. But only if it has marmalade.”

John obliges him, and doesn’t even complain when Sherlock simply moves to sit at the small
kitchen table and waits expectantly for John to fix his toast for him. He just bites back a sigh because he doesn’t want to push his luck. He knows Sherlock would have no compunctions about not eating all weekend long, and that is just something that John won’t abide if he is finally getting the chance to care for Sherlock for a few days. So he bites his tongue and makes Sherlock’s breakfast, choosing the marmalade from the many jars John has placed on the table and dripping it thickly onto the toast when it is done. He sits at the table next to Sherlock and spreads the marmalade in a gooey layer on top of the golden crust of the bread, all the while not saying a single word. When he moves to pass the toast to Sherlock, the boy simply looks at the bread in John’s hand and doesn’t reach out to take it.

“More,” he says simply, and John can only assume that he is referring to the marmalade.

John isn’t quite able to bite back his sigh completely this time, but he still doesn’t say anything as he spreads more marmalade on Sherlock’s toast—an ample, sticky layer of it that is almost as thick as the bread itself now.

When he passes the toast back, Sherlock takes it this time with a happy, childlike smile and immediately bites into it. Sticky globs of marmalade squeeze out of Sherlock’s lips and threaten to drip down the sides of the bread and over his long, pale fingers. Sherlock releases a tiny little moan of delight at the taste of the topping, and John suddenly realises that he is staring rather intently while Sherlock eats his toast as if it is the most erotic thing that John has ever seen.

John thinks that it might just be.

After Sherlock finishes his toast, he proceeds to lick all of the wayward marmalade off of his fingers one by one, sucking each digit past his plump lips and pulling them back out entirely clean of preserves, shiny and slick with spit. When he is done with his fingers, he runs his tongue over his lips, but John sees a small speck of marmalade at the corner of his mouth where his tongue can’t reach, sitting on his pale skin temptingly.

“Sherlock, you have a little something…” he makes a vague gesture towards his own face, not even really sure what he is saying. All he can think about is that tongue and that mouth and that marmalade spread over other areas of Sherlock’s body.

He swallows thickly.

Sherlock’s tongue tries to dart out to clean the marmalade but it isn’t long enough, and John can’t stand watching the display anymore. He reaches across the table and wipes the marmalade off of the corner of the plush mouth with his bare fingers, not even realising he has done it until he is pulling away, intending to wipe his hands off on a napkin and be done with it.

But Sherlock has other ideas.

Before John can pull his hand away, Sherlock reaches out and catches his wrist. He smirks at John devilishly as he pulls the man’s fingers back towards his face, opening his sinful little mouth for them. He runs his tongue along the pads of John’s index and middle fingers before closing his plump lips around them, the feel of his mouth hot and moist against John’s skin. John can feel Sherlock’s tongue work around his fingers, laving the skin softly, sucking firmly and slipping in between the digits wetly. It makes John writhe in his seat, groaning softly at the sensation.

When Sherlock finally draws off of John’s fingers, it is with a scrape of teeth and an obscene wet sound that is only matched by the filthy, wicked smile he is giving John.

Oh, the little tease knows exactly what he’s doing, John manages to think before his brain decides
to cease functioning for a moment. All of his blood pools south in an instant, lighting a fire low in his belly that spreads to his groin and fills his cock with heat and desire.

“Shit,” John can’t help but whisper softly, eyes still glued on Sherlock’s face. Sherlock looks slightly stunned by the fact that John has let him take the game this far, adding to his childlike appearance. He is breathing heavily, having aroused himself with his own act, and his cheeks are flushed. He looks away from John suddenly, the blush flaring brightly, and John suddenly realises something. Despite all of his boldness and teasing, John can tell that Sherlock is merely acting a part; playing a game that he doesn’t really know the rules to. Ever since that night at the coffee house—when Sherlock rubbed himself awkwardly, desperately, up against John—he has not instigated sex in such a bold, open, wanton way. John can begin to detect an undercurrent of apprehension and nervousness in Sherlock as the brunet comes to recongise that he has put himself in a position to possibly have his advances rejected. John can see that Sherlock doesn’t exactly know how to move forward from here.

The boy is daft, though, if he thinks for even one second that John could possibly reject him. There is no way in hell that John could ever not give in to the mad genius. He’s proven that a million times over by now. Sherlock must not know that, however, because he continues to stare at John wide-eyed. His child-like trepidation is what finally pushes John past the point of rationality, and he is suddenly desperate to encourage Sherlock to continue.

“Do it again,” John groans out, and he doesn’t even care that his voice sounds frantic, pleading. All he cares about is having Sherlock’s mouth back on him, having Sherlock do as he pleases with him.

At John’s words, Sherlock’s eyes widened slightly in surprise. His mouth parts the tiniest bit as his tongue comes out to lick his lips nervously, trying to decipher just exactly what it is that John wants from him. He is suddenly so unsure of himself and hesitant. So John decides to help him out.

“Again, Sherlock,” John commands him, and he reaches his hand out once more, fingers straining towards Sherlock’s mouth in a silent order. “I want you to do it again.”

Sherlock stares at him for only a moment more before his whole face transforms. His eyes light up happily and his lips twist up into a wicked smile before he lifts his own hands to grab at John’s and pull it back towards his mouth. He takes in John’s index and middle fingers eagerly, sucking them the back of his throat in one go.

“Yeah, just like that,” John encourages as his fingers are surrounded by the velvety warm softness of Sherlock’s mouth. “That’s beautiful.”

For his part, Sherlock seems to rather enjoy having John’s fingers in him no matter how he can get them. He licks and laves and sucks, teeth scraping and tongue soothing until John’s knees are weak and his cock is straining against the flimsy material of his underwear. But Sherlock doesn’t seem to be finished, and John wouldn’t dream of interrupting him. He reaches out to grab up the jar of marmalade and pops John’s fingers out of his mouth, only to dip them into the sticky preserve. Sherlock brings them to his lips once again, sucking them back inside, heedless of the mess he is making on his face as they smear across his cheeks and chin.

John watches him the entire time but suddenly has to shut his eyes against the image that the dark-haired boy in front of him creates. He wonders if Sherlock knows just how arousing he is, if he knows just how crazy he drives John. The older man’s stomach clenches as he feels Sherlock’s wet tongue suckle at his fingertips and John knows that if he doesn’t make Sherlock stop soon things are quickly going to get out of hand.
Sherlock unwittingly continues licking the marmalade off of John’s fingers diligently, his tongue soft and warm on John’s skin.

“Why don’t you clean yourself up instead?” John asks, his voice husky and rough.

When he dares to open his eyes again, he sees Sherlock smiling wickedly at him, lips stained sweet with sugar and fruit. “It tastes so much better on you, though.”

That is all it takes for a low growl to escape John’s throat. Struggling up from his seat, he yanks his hand out of Sherlock’s grasp and pulls Sherlock closer to him, up to his feet and out of his seat. Standing as well, John quickly wastes no time in pushing Sherlock against the edge of the table, kissing him fiercely and licking the mess off of his mouth. Sherlock lets out a small, strangled yelp as John shoves him roughly against the edge of the table. When his lips open up to the brutal kiss, John slips his tongue inside, tasting sugary sweetness, and Sherlock’s yelp turns slowly into a moan.

John’s hands, one still sticky from marmalade and spit, come up to tug at Sherlock’s clothing, tearing his own rugby jersey off of the slender form. He doesn’t know if he loves the sight of Sherlock naked more or less than the sight of Sherlock in his own clothing, but the man quickly keeps divesting him of anything that hides his pale body from John’s eyes. Sherlock leans back against the shoddy table placidly as John finally manages to tear everything off of him and he stands in the kitchen naked, his body trembling in what John can only guess is apprehension.

There has only been one time that they have done it outside of a bedroom, the night that John met Mycroft, but even then there had not been this level of urgency, this level of desperation.

John pulls his own clothing off and moves to wrap Sherlock in a hug, letting his body heat warm him. He kisses Sherlock again, but this time he does it slowly, sweetly, one hand reaching down to grab Sherlock’s cock. He gives it a gentle squeeze that makes Sherlock’s body tremble for a different reason. John knows that although Sherlock wants this, the boy is still very new to sex, and John has to remember to try and not overwhelm him.

So he lets his mouth make a slow trail of kisses down Sherlock’s long pale neck, down his bony chest and to his nipples as Sherlock whines and writhes against him. He can see Sherlock’s hands reaching back to grip the edges of the table, his knuckles white from the strength of his hold. Sherlock uses the leverage to push himself up against John, slotting their hips together and grinding their cocks against one another’s.

John pulls him away from the edge of the table suddenly, capturing Sherlock’s mouth once again with his own before twirling Sherlock around quickly and pushing his chest down onto the tabletop. When Sherlock braces himself against the side of the table, John manoeuvres himself between Sherlock’s knees, pushing Sherlock’s feet farther apart with his own and snaking a hand around in front of Sherlock’s body to stroke at his cock.

Sherlock lets him, opening his thighs willingly to John’s ministrations. He moans wantonly as John strokes up the hot, rigid flesh of his stiff prick, squeezing the head and pushing a drop of clear precome out to sit at the tip, shining temptingly. John brings his thumb round the crown of Sherlock’s prick to rub the flat pad of his finger through it, smear it slickly around the head and down the frenulum. Pressed against the table in front of him, Sherlock shudders and moans, and John can’t stand not having the boy in his mouth for one second longer.

“Keep your hands on the table and spread your legs,” John orders, and his voice is rough with want and deep with arousal. “Take a step back and stick your arse out. Stay bent over for me.”

He helps manoeuvre Sherlock as the boy scrambles to obey his command, settling him into
position. Sherlock does not seem happy with having his face shoved among jars of preserves and
into cold, hard wood, but John thinks he won’t complain when the man’s blunt fingers play along
the stiff, hard line of Sherlock’s dangling cock.

“This may be a little cold,” he warns Sherlock as he reaches out to the jar of marmalade to gather
some onto his fingers. He can sense Sherlock about to ask John what he is talking about, but
before Sherlock can even open his mouth John spreads the gooey, golden preserve on his cock.

“John!” Sherlock exclaims in surprise. He turns his head to see what John has just done and is
greeted with the sight of John’s hand full of marmalade, his fingers placing globs of the sugary
concoction down Sherlock’s length.

“What are you doing?” he asks John breathlessly, his voice hitching and his eyes falling closed as
John’s jam-slicked hand glides smoothly over him.

“I’m making a meal out of you,” John answers, as if it is obvious.

Then he drops out of Sherlock’s line of sight as he crouches down and lowers his head to lick the
marmalade off of Sherlock’s prick.

He is not at the best angle to be sucking Sherlock’s cock, kneeling on the floor behind the teen as
he is. Sherlock’s erection is so stiff, though, that John simply has to pull it back towards him and
tilt his head to the side and he finds that he can fit his mouth around most of it easily enough.
Sherlock seems to enjoy it, anyways. He gasps as John’s tongue swirls around the tip, sucking off
all of the sticky preserve that John has slathered on it, and John can hear his long arms scramble
across the smooth top of the table, looking for something to hold on to. It seems that they only
succeed in knocking over several of the glass jars of the various types of jams and jellies that John
had brought out for their breakfast, though, the sticky concoctions spilling thick and slow across
the flat wood.

When he has cleaned off Sherlock’s cock, John stands back up and grabs up the jar to spread more
marmalade across the reddened, engorged flesh. He squeezes it tightly with his fist for good
measure and watches as Sherlock pants and squirms against the sensation. “I wish I had brought
lube down with me,” John tells him before bending back down and sucking Sherlock’s cock back
in his mouth. “I want to fuck you so badly right now.”

“I…pocket,” Sherlock pants incoherently, and his voice sounds completely dazed. “Jersey.”

John looks down at the pile of their clothes and suddenly remembers the small breast pocket that
his rugby uniform had. Completely pointless he had thought at the time. He has to bite back a
grin; leave it to Sherlock to bring lube down to breakfast. The berk had probably hoped that John’s
cock wouldn’t come out of his arse at all this weekend.

John abandons his breakfast treat for only as long as it takes him to stoop down and dig through the
clothes to find the bottle of lube that had been in the bedside drawer last night. A little too eagerly,
he pops the cap open and pours a generous amount on the fingers of his clean hand. He waits a
moment to let it warm up to body temperature before he reaches out to tentatively smear it across
Sherlock’s waiting hole.

At the first touch of John’s fingers to his entrance, Sherlock spreads his legs as wide as they can
go, opening up completely for John. The man dips his first finger in completely, unable to go as
slow as he had yesterday, and the moan Sherlock lets loose is matched only by John’s own.

He can feel Sherlock’s arms slowly give out beneath him, and Sherlock sluggishly sinks down
until his face is pressed against the tabletop. His dark, curly hair drags in all of the spilled preserves that are scattered across the table but he doesn’t seem to care. John figures it must be pretty hard to focus when someone is stretching your aching entrance relentlessly, pushing in and out in a quick rhythmic motion that leaves little times for breaths, much less thought. He brings his other hand around to pump Sherlock’s cock smoothly, covering everything in the remnants of the sticky marmalade that hadn’t been licked completely off of his prick.

Unable to wait much longer, John adds another finger quickly and Sherlock groans at the stretch of it. His body gives out completely from under him and his chest falls the rest of the way onto the wood. John uses the opportunity of sudden compliance to finish prepping him swiftly, scissoring and stretching him widely before adding a third finger. Sherlock gasps at the last addition, and his body must still be screaming that it is close to its limit, just like yesterday. John isn’t too worried, though—they will have plenty of time to get Sherlock accustomed to taking more in the future.

With three fingers shoved deep inside of him, John can see Sherlock wincing and squirming uncomfortably. But when he finds Sherlock’s prostate, the small sounds of unease quickly become gasps of pleasure as John rubs against the bundle of nerves insistently.

“John,” Sherlock gasps. “Please—fuck—”

John stands up and moves into position behind Sherlock, spreading his knees as far as they will go to get him into a better position, wanting to take as much of Sherlock as he can. He removes his fingers, leaving Sherlock’s hole gaping widely and glistening with lube. John takes only a moment to appreciate the sight of it before he can’t wait any longer and he fists his cock, wetting it with the remaining lube before sliding into Sherlock slowly, taking care not to go too fast. He doesn’t want to stretch Sherlock too quickly and risk hurting him. John takes long moments letting Sherlock’s body get used to every bit of him before pushing in a little deeper, gripping Sherlock’s hips harshly to keep him from squirming and thrashing against his cock. Sherlock grits his teeth and sucks in a breath as the middle of John’s cock stretches him the widest, but his body opens up to John eventually and the man slides slickly the rest of the way inside. John stops just before he bottoms out once again, like the day before, ever mindful of the sounds and facial expressions coming from his lover, tiny little cues letting John know that Sherlock’s body can’t take any more of him in.

When John begins moving, it is with a slow back and forth rocking motion to let Sherlock get used to the feeling of being fucked over a kitchen table while he tries to keep his balance.

With every surge of John’s hips from behind him, Sherlock’s forearms slid slickly across the smooth wooden tabletop, covered in the gooey preserves that have leaked out of the overturned jars that had been sitting on the table. He sees Sherlock try to find something to grab onto, but there is nothing except jam and marmalade and flaking bits of uneaten toast and cold beans smearing everywhere.

The cold wood underneath Sherlock’s torso is unforgiving as John pushes the boy into it. His thrusts increase in force as the pleasure rises, and John tightens his grip on Sherlock’s sides. He slides his hands around to Sherlock’s stomach and presses back gently, pulling Sherlock backwards so that he is no longer leaning forward on the dirty table but standing up, pressed flush up against John’s chest now. Sherlock balances precariously on his feet as John fucks into him from behind, and Sherlock’s hands on the edge of the table are the only thing keeping them from falling forward. One of John’s hands trails teasingly up his lover’s stomach, over a hard nipple and upwards still to grab his chin, turning his head so that John can reach Sherlock’s lips.

Sherlock’s mouth opens diligently to John’s tongue, and John moans at the taste of the marmalade that Sherlock had licked off of him earlier which still lingers on his lips.
John releases Sherlock’s mouth to trail hot, burning kisses along the pale neck and jawline, grunting and breathing heavily as he quickens his pace, fucking into Sherlock harder. Suddenly, Sherlock cries out and clenches around him as the man finds an angle that hits his prostate dead on.

John’s tongue darts out to lick the shell of Sherlock’s ear, hot and wet and soft. “You taste delicious,” he whispers against Sherlock’s skin, his voice broken as he pounds into Sherlock, and the boy can’t seem to hold back his orgasm any longer. He keens and John feels his body tighten, muscles going rigid as John’s thrusts pound ruthlessly into his prostate, and he grows ever closer to the edge of climax. The noises being ripped from his throat sound almost like sobs, and John loves the vibration of them against his body. The first time he had taken Sherlock he had been gentle, soft, slow. But this time…this time is for John, and he is too desperate for gentle and soft and slow right now. This time, he wants to completely wreck the boy, tear into him, pull him apart. He wants to fuck Sherlock Holmes in the middle of his kitchen hard, deep, relentlessly, until Sherlock falls to pieces around him. John wants to make Sherlock scream his name as he comes. John wants to absolutely ruin him.

He can feel Sherlock’s body grow tight and rigid against his own, and John knows that he is close. He can hear it in the desperate noises Sherlock is making; needy little sounds that make John’s balls draw up tight against his body. He knows that he isn’t going to last very much longer, either. The hand that has been sitting on Sherlock’s hip drops lower to grab at the boy’s stiff, leaking cock, and Sherlock practically wails. Sherlock reaches out to grab at John’s arm where it holds him up against John’s body across his pale torso. John pumps Sherlock’s cock in time with his deep thrusts, dropping his head down to Sherlock’s shoulder to kiss at the sweat-covered, slick skin there.

“Come on, baby, I know you’re close,” he whispers, words choppy and broken from the force of his thrusts.

Sherlock whines and sobs and digs his fingers harder into John’s arm as John’s hand tightens over his stiff prick, making Sherlock fuck his fist as John’s hips push Sherlock forward with each stroke.

“Oh, God,” Sherlock moans brokenly, the sound deep and low. Too low for John’s liking.

“No, let me hear you,” he growls out next to Sherlock’s ear, biting Sherlock’s neck hard and sucking on the skin in the way he knows drives Sherlock mad.

“Ah, fuck. John!” Sherlock says. And then, louder, “John!”

The man grins wickedly against the sweaty skin. “Yeah, that’s it, love. Louder. I want to hear it. I want to hear you scream for me.”

He pounds into Sherlock’s tight heat insistently and he can feel Sherlock right there, teetering on the brink of climax, so close. John has never wanted anything more in his life than to push him over the edge. So he thrusts harder, deeper, and Sherlock actually does sob from the pressure John is applying to his prostate. He kisses Sherlock’s earlobe softly and whispers to him, “Come for me, love. Give it to me, I want it.”

And then Sherlock is coming, his semen mixing beautifully with the mess on the table, and the sound he makes is unlike anything John has heard come out of his throat, beautiful and broken and his.

After a few more violent thrusts John comes after him, his orgasm intense and mind-numbing. Sherlock is absolutely limp in his arms and John doesn’t know how he is holding up not only
himself but Sherlock as well. He feels loose and relaxed, warm and sticky and satisfied. They both hold still for a few moments, bodies convulsing from their orgasms and breaths returning to normal as their heartbeats slow and their eyes take in the mess they made of the kitchen. John can feel himself softening inside of Sherlock, his cock slipping out slowly, and he is sure his semen is seeping thickly out of the boy.

“Well, that was…” John says, at a loss and embarrassed about his lack of self-control. They had been trying to eat breakfast for Christ’s sake, he thinks as he brings a hand up to rub through the sweaty hair at the nape of his neck.

“Yes,” Sherlock agrees, smirking and still out of breath. “I don’t think I’ve ever enjoyed a meal so much.”

John turns to glare at him, a chastisement ready on his tongue, but when he opens his mouth all that comes out is a laugh. He can’t help it; it seems so ridiculous all of a sudden. He is 35 years old, and he is having sex at 8 am in the middle of his kitchen like he is a bloody newlywed again.

So he laughs and hugs Sherlock tight to him, heedless of the mess smeared all over the boy’s arms and torso and groin, and the two of them stand there in the middle of his kitchen, naked and giggling like naughty children.

He feels absolutely amazing.

When they sober up, John takes stock of the area around them. The kitchen is a catastrophe of spilled and broken jam jars, and preserves are smeared all over the surface of the kitchen table, dripping down like molasses onto the floor. Pieces of bread are everywhere, some whole, others in scattered crumbs. Even the tins of beans have been upturned and spilled onto the smooth wooden surface. John does not look forward to cleaning any of it up at all. He turns to look at Sherlock and thinks that there is one mess, though, that he wouldn’t mind cleaning up in the least at that moment. He takes Sherlock’s hand and pulls him out of the kitchen and up the stairs, the two laughing and kissing and touching the whole way back to John’s bedroom.

They crash through the door to the bathroom and somehow both manage to climb into the shower together without slipping and causing a major injury to themselves or each other. They don’t bathe—they can’t be bothered. They simply turn the water on and rinse all of the sticky breakfast toppings and semen away and then dry each other off and fall back into bed, still twisted up in each other and laughing like loons.

John wonders at himself briefly, surprised by his single-mindedness this morning; he can’t seem to be able to get enough of the boy, can’t seem to be able to keep his hands off of Sherlock, can’t seem to be able to stop kissing him. He is on top of Sherlock once again, pushing him into the soft pillows and plush blankets beneath him, and when he grinds down into Sherlock’s hip John isn’t nearly as surprised as Sherlock is to feel a burgeoning stiffness in between them.

“John, you’re—” Sherlock gasps, shocked when he feels John’s second erection of the morning. He is apparently more amazed that John actually seems to want to do something about it, though. Yesterday had been the first time they had sex twice in one day but there had been hours in between. This, John knows, is wholly unprecedented and Sherlock realises that. But then that sharp flash of understanding shoots through Sherlock’s quicksilver eyes, that look that means that he thinks he has figured something out. Sherlock stares at John and says, “Oh. Pill?”

John simply shakes his head, though, lips pressed to Sherlock’s warm skin. “No,” he mumbles against Sherlock’s mouth. “You. You’re driving me crazy, you have no idea,” he answers truthfully. His pills sit in his bedside table, today’s still untaken.
At that, Sherlock beams at him, bright and dazzling, and John’s stomach flutters. He will never get enough of telling Sherlock how wonderful he is, how much John loves him; the feeling is heady. “God, Sherlock you don’t even know how much you turn me on. All the time. It’s feels like this slow-fire burn, eating away at me.” He kisses him again, deep, dirty, leaving no room for misunderstanding. “Touch yourself for me, I want to see.”

Sherlock reaches down between them and grabs his cock, and John moves back and watches as the long slender length of it swells in Sherlock’s hand, filling the loose circle of his palm. The tender, pink head peeks out of the tip of his foreskin, shiny with precome. Sherlock lets go of his prick long enough to bring his hand up to his mouth and lick his thumb, then he grabs himself again. He rubs the wet pad of his thumb across the slit and slicks the precome around, causing more to seep out of his hole.

“Christ,” John whispers, mesmerised by it. He licks his lips, his mouth watering as he imagines the taste of Sherlock on his tongue. But he wants to watch the boy so desperately. “Stroke yourself, Sherlock, come on,” he urges. “Push your foreskin up over the head and then back down, so that I can see the precome there, at the tip.”

Sherlock does, pumping his cock slowly and dragging his foreskin back and forth with his strokes. The extra skin bunches and stretches, covering the head of his cock and pushing over the edge of it so that it closes up around it, a small piece of loose skin hanging off of his cock that John wants to tongue mindlessly. Then he slowly strokes down his shaft again, pulling his flesh taut and tight and exposing the pink skin of the head beneath it, the crown glistening. John’s own cock jumps at the sight of Sherlock—he loves watching the boy masturbate himself with his own foreskin.

“There’s my good boy,” John praises him, and Sherlock preens. “Look at how wet you are,” he says, reaching a hand out to smear his fingers through the clear liquid at the tip of Sherlock’s cock. He brings his hand up to his mouth, sucking his fingers clean before dropping his head to take Sherlock in his mouth.

Sherlock’s cock is slender and evenly round, making it easy to get his mouth around, unlike John’s which bulges out past the head. John’s lips slide down it all at once, and he has the foresight to hold Sherlock’s hips down to the bed as Sherlock gasps and bucks involuntarily up into the heat of his mouth. He sucks once, hard, and can taste the warm bitterness of Sherlock’s precome seep onto the back of his tongue before he slowly pulls off. He licks along Sherlock’s shaft as he goes, drawing frantic, nearly pained noises from his lover.

When he comes off of Sherlock’s cock completely, John looks down at the teen, taking him in. He is between Sherlock’s legs, the brunet’s knees are drawn up halfway on either side of John’s head and Sherlock’s thighs are parted obscenely to let John take him however John wants. Sherlock’s legs are long and thin; an endless, flat expanse of seemingly hairless, smooth skin. The flesh is so pale John can’t help sucking little bright-red bruises all along the length of them, just to watch the color blossom in a burst of pleased moans only to fade back to paleness seconds later. John bites and licks his way up and down each leg as Sherlock moans and squirms and thrashes against him, and John’s cock strains in his lap, wanting desperately to be inside of him.

He knows he shouldn’t. John had taken him only a little while ago, and Sherlock is still practically a virgin. And John certainly hadn’t been gentle this morning; Sherlock is bound to be sore. But as John kneels over Sherlock, he finds that he doesn’t have the strength to resist his desire.

He never did, when it came to the Sherlock Holmes.

“Do you want me to fuck you again, Sherlock?” he asks, dropping his head to suck a love bite into the soft flesh at the top of Sherlock’s thigh.
At his question, Sherlock’s legs fall open wider almost involuntarily, as if in invitation, and he moans. “Yes,” he begs on a whisper, his words turning into a groan. “Yes, please.”

And the sound of it, of Sherlock begging…John is lost. “Oh, God, that’s lovely.” John rises up and kisses Sherlock’s mouth once more, something deep and sensuous and wet, before pulling away from him reluctantly, rubbing his hands down Sherlock’s sides. “Turn over for me.”

Sherlock rushes to do as he is told, flipping onto his stomach and then pushing himself onto his knees, dropping his head and his shoulders onto the pillows like he had for John the day before, presenting himself to the man unashamedly.

John’s heart stops in his chest and his cock jumps in his lap as he looks at the picture before him, Sherlock ready for him, so eager and willing to be fucked. “Christ, you’re a complete health hazard, you know that?” he asks the teen, and Sherlock just grins at him before he buries his face in the pillows.

John gives him a light slap on the bum for his teasing and turns his attention to getting Sherlock ready for his cock. He can see that Sherlock’s hole is slightly red and puffy from its earlier use. When John spreads him open, using his hands to pull his arse cheeks apart, the last dregs of lube and come that he had put in the boy earlier trickle out, untouched by their hurried, inefficient shower. “Fuck, you’re going to be the death of me,” he groans, and it seems that Sherlock is hell bent on that being true because the dirty little tease clenches his hole while John is staring right at it and a last drip is squeezed out of him, filthy and obscene.

John’s never seen anything so erotic in his life. He has the strongest urge to lick Sherlock clean, and he fights it back by the barest of threads. Instead, he licks his lips and runs a finger through the mess of Sherlock’s entrance, rubbing over the rim and stopping to press lightly at the loosened muscle there. Although John may have fucked him not that long ago, Sherlock’s hole is still tight enough that it doesn’t gape in the slightest, and John knows that he will still need lube to prep him.

He grabs up a new bottle of lubricant that he had bought specifically for their first weekend together and pours its contents into his palm, rubbing it around, then puts his middle finger back in place. He presses the tip gently against the rim of Sherlock’s entrance, waiting. “Sherlock, look at me,” he says, because John wants to see Sherlock, wants to know what he looks like when John is penetrating him.

Sherlock slowly turns his head as it rests on the pillows, looking over his shoulder, and when he meets John’s gaze, John finally presses a finger inside of him. He can feel Sherlock shake violently; John can hear him moan at the still-strange sensation. John keeps his finger motionless for a moment, letting Sherlock get used to the intrusion. When Sherlock starts undulating his hips—pushing back, silently asking for more, moaning John’s name—John finally works deeper past the resistance of Sherlock’s body gently. He massages the ring of muscle from the inside, feeling the added slickness of his own come from earlier and how it changes the way Sherlock feels inside. John is sure that Sherlock feels full already, he can tell by the way Sherlock’s body pushes at the intrusion, yet John can tell that he wants more as well, all at the same time.

“Another,” Sherlock moans, and John can’t possibly resist that order. He doesn’t worry that Sherlock isn’t stretched enough yet; he can feel how relaxed the muscle is from its earlier use. It isn’t something that will easily go beyond the stretch of two fingers, but for now it is enough to slip his index finger into Sherlock with only minimal discomfort to him.

Still, Sherlock groans at the feeling and squirms against the natural response of his body. John shifts closer to him from behind and strokes his side soothingly. “Shh, shh,” he says softly. “Take it. You can take it. Good boy.”
He scissored his fingers against the press of Sherlock’s body, pushing into him deeply and still feeling the slickness of his come as far in as he can reach. “Fuck, Sherlock,” he pants, bending over the teen’s back to plant kisses along his spine. “You’re still open and wet from when I fucked you earlier. Can you feel it? Feel how loose you are?”

Sherlock makes a strange keening noise that might have been an answer if John hadn’t taken that moment to slip a third finger into him. The muscle is still tight, but it is slightly more pliable that he thought it would be from being stretched out once already. John will have to remember how easy a second fuck is in the future.

He only has the patience to stretch him for a moment more before he can’t take it any longer and he gently pulls his fingers from the boy. Sherlock pants and trembles below him as he re-lubes his hand to slick his cock up, and then he moves into position behind Sherlock, watching him. Sherlock’s face is still turned so that John can see him and the man looks, takes in every detail of his lover’s expression as he places the head of his cock to Sherlock’s prepped hole. He presses forward gently and lets the crown slide in, the tightness of it pushing his foreskin back. Sherlock bites his lips at the feel of John entering him, but the man can tell it isn’t wholly uncomfortable until past the head of John’s cock, when Sherlock winces and closes his eyes, his lip turning white from the pressure of his teeth. John runs a soothing hand up and down his back, stilling and letting him grow accustomed to the stretch of it, waiting until Sherlock opens his eyes again and looks back at him before continuing.

When he thinks Sherlock can take it, he presses forward again, Sherlock’s body swallowing him up easily as the thickest part of him slides past the slight resistance. John doesn’t think he will ever get used to the feeling of slipping in so suddenly after such pressure; he’s never felt anything so amazing.

Sherlock gasps as John pushes up against him, his stomach almost touching the boy’s back. John can see his mouth open against the pillows, can hear the tiny huffs of air as Sherlock breathes while John pushes forward more, just a little more. He wants to see how much Sherlock can take, how deep the boy can take him in. His cock isn’t short by any means, and Sherlock winces again as John presses ever deeper, slowly, so slowly, until he can almost feel his thighs meet Sherlock’s thighs. He can only imagine what it would feel like for his balls to press against Sherlock’s flushed and sweaty skin, to have that added pressure whenever John fucks him. He takes a deep, calming breath and looks down the length of his body, in between them, as best as he can to see his prick being swallowed up by Sherlock’s arse. A jolt of arousal shoots through John and he can feel his cock pulse inside of Sherlock. It is the hottest thing John has ever seen, Sherlock wrapped tightly around him, taking nearly all of him.

He pulls out and watches the drag of his cock against the rim of Sherlock’s arse, the friction that the two muscles create, the feel of it. He moans and Sherlock makes a sound that matches it. John smiles down at him, the boy’s face pressed red and sweaty against the pillow.

“Do you like that? Does it feel good?” he asks.

“Y-yeah,” Sherlock huffs out as John pushes back in, out of breath.

“Yeah?”

Sherlock tries to nod but can’t seem to move his head correctly with his weight pressed down on it. So instead he whimpers, “Uh-huh,” and fuck if it isn’t the sexiest little sound that John has ever heard.

He growls and thrusts into Sherlock, pressing him into the bed harshly, pounding into him. His
hands on Sherlock’s hips make fluttering trails from Sherlock’s plump arse cheeks up to his back, then to his shoulders, and finally up to his neck. John wants to grab Sherlock, spread him open, pin him down, but he doesn’t have enough fucking hands for everything he wants to do to him. Not unless…

“Sherlock,” he huffs, slowing his thrusts, “Sherlock, let go of the pillows. Spread your arse for me.”

Sherlock looks dazed as he does so, not asking questions, just following John’s instructions. It takes him a few tries to get a good grip on his arse cheeks because John won’t stop thrusting into him, but he finally does. Sherlock grips the plump flesh and digs in with his fingers, spreading himself wide for John and easing the man’s way. With his hands free, John is able to pull Sherlock’s hips closer to him, push down farther on Sherlock’s shoulders to get a deeper angle, hitting Sherlock’s prostate as he thrusts and making Sherlock curse.

“Fuck,” Sherlock grits out as John pounds into him, “Don’t stop, John. Please, don’t stop.”

John shakes his head, even though Sherlock has his face shoved back into the pillows without the support of his hands and John knows Sherlock can’t see him. “Never. I won’t ever stop,” John tells him. “Christ, you feel too good for me to stop.”

As he thrusts into the tight heat surrounding him, John reaches a hand down Sherlock’s body to grab the boy’s cock, solid and stiff as it hangs away from his stomach. With his hands spreading himself open for John, the blond knows that Sherlock can’t touch himself, so the job will have to fall to him, he supposes. He squeezes Sherlock’s prick tightly, using the force of his thrusts to push Sherlock through his grip, precome smearing the way.

From the depths of the pillows he hears Sherlock, voice muffled but distinguishable. “God, I’m so close. Are you? I want you to come in me, John. Give it to me, please, I want it. I want it all.”

John wonders if Sherlock even knows he’s talking. He doubts it—Sherlock sounds out of his mind. But if Sherlock wants all of it, John is more than happy to oblige him. Only not like this….

“Yes, just like that, open up for me,” John groans as he sinks in to the impossible heat of Sherlock’s body.

Beneath him Sherlock gasps as he is penetrated for the first time in this new position. He throws his head back, pressing hard into the soft pillows under him, exposing the long line of his neck as he grits his teeth when John hits a particularly good spot. “John, John will you touch me, please?”
he asks desperately, out of breath.

“Of course, baby,” John says automatically, moving back and slowing his thrusts so that he can better give Sherlock what he is asking for. John will always give him what he is asking for. “Whatever you want.”

He lets Sherlock’s legs gently drop to either side of him. Sherlock winces slightly, not used to this position while being fucked, but he quickly grows accustomed to it. John lets his hands trail up Sherlock’s pale thighs, across his groin. He slips them up to either side of Sherlock’s hips for a moment, staring down in wonder at the sight before him. He has never noticed before, but his hands are so large compared to Sherlock’s slim waist. He wraps his fingers around the soft curve of Sherlock’s stomach and watches as his hands frame Sherlock’s hard cock while he uses his hold to pull Sherlock harshly towards him with every thrust.

“John, please.”

John drags his fingers across the soft, sweat-slick skin and over to Sherlock’s engorged prick. He takes Sherlock’s shaft in his grip and holds his hand still as he rocks Sherlock’s body back and forth, his thumb dragging along the underside of it and swirling around the tip.

“God, John, I—”

Sherlock comes suddenly while John is watching him with no warning, all over himself, just like John wants. He makes a mess of himself, like he always does, except this time he has an excuse for it, and so John doesn’t mind cleaning him up with soft, warm swipes of his tongue along any trembling strips of flesh that he can reach while he continues to fuck the boy.

His own orgasm comes swiftly afterwards, the taste of Sherlock still on his tongue. He presses deep into Sherlock, and he can feel his balls pulse and throb against Sherlock’s arse cheeks as the boy holds his legs up for John. When John pulls out, he tells Sherlock to stay there, not to move, as he sits back on his heels and watches his come seep out of Sherlock’s arsehole, trickling down his trembling skin. Before it can stain the bed sheets, John takes a finger and catches it, pushing it back inside Sherlock’s stretched, open hole as Sherlock squirms around him but stays obediently silent, letting John play with him.

“I think we should invest in buying you a plug,” he teases.

“You should, since you seem to have an unhealthy obsession with it,” Sherlock quips back, smiling at him warmly, voice still quavering slightly from his orgasm.

They lie there in silence, sticky and sated, and neither of them feels the need to speak for a long time.

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When they do resume talking, it is in hushed tones, telling one another quiet, secret things about themselves. Sherlock tells John a little bit about the time of his life before his mother left, before his father started drinking so heavily, when Sherlock was still a small child. When he was younger and happier. Sherlock whispers that his father had been a man of many rules and that he had expected Sherlock to finish every meal placed before him. Sherlock tells him that he would be punished if he didn’t finish his food, and John begins to see a pattern in Sherlock’s strange eating habits now that he is older. Sherlock remembers story after story of how he, always contentious of authority, found every possible way to rebel as a child—leaving meals unfinished, picking through his food to find only what he liked best, taking only a few bites and declaring he was done eating
only to be hungry later on. He refused to give his father the satisfaction of asking for more food, though. John tries to be angry because he knows that Sherlock’s bratty behaviour as a child led to the predicament that he is in today, but, really, he can’t help but shake his head in fond exasperation at the idiot lying in bed with him, the man-child who would cut off his nose to spite his face and not even realise it. John understands now, why Sherlock is so picky when it comes to his eating habits: he has been basically allowed to eat like a spoilt 6 year old for the majority of his life, with no one to tell him otherwise. Well, John will just have to start fixing that as soon as possible.

They trail off into silence for a moment as Sherlock goes quiet, finishing his story, lost in thoughts of his childhood. The silence isn’t uncomfortable, but now that they are talking about Sherlock’s past, John wants to take advantage of the opportunity. Sherlock doesn’t often talk about the more painful parts of his childhood, with good reason, but John wants to know. He wants to know everything about Sherlock, and he worries that he may not get another chance like this weekend.

“Why did you use?” John finally asks on a whisper, an indeterminable amount of time later after they have scrounged around in the kitchen for a late meal. They had stayed pressed so tightly against one another for so long that they felt almost stuck to each other when they finally moved, the semen drying tacky and crusted between them. Neither one seems to care much, however. Wrapped once more in the warm circle of his arms in bed, John feels Sherlock shrug noncommittally. They have never talked much about Sherlock’s drug use, and with good reason: John doesn’t like to think about Sherlock hurting himself or feeling so alone that he thought drugs were the only option he had, and Sherlock doesn’t like to remember that there was a time when he had not been able to take care of himself.

John wants to know, though. John wants to know everything about this beautiful, broken boy lying next to him. He wants to know all of Sherlock’s deepest, darkest fears and all of his dreams. And, lying here with Sherlock in his bed as the sun sets around them while they prepare to sleep through another night together, it feels like the perfect time to learn all of Sherlock’s secrets.

“I suppose because…” Sherlock begins, voice careful and quiet, “because there was too much and not enough all at once. My mind never stopped and neither did the pain. But the emptiness and loneliness were the worst parts.” He pauses and John thinks he is done speaking about the matter. When John glances over at him, though, Sherlock is frowning and biting his lip. He looks as if there is something else he wants to say but doesn’t know how. He opens his mouth once, twice, each time drawing breath to speak but not saying anything. John waits patiently for him to find the words. John will always wait for him.

Finally, Sherlock seems to find them at last. He opens his mouth a third time, and words manage to come out. “But you make it better,” he whispers quietly, almost as if he is afraid that John will hear him. “You make everything quiet, and it doesn’t hurt any more. You fill up all of that empty space and I know that I’m not alone anymore. Before you came along, alone was all I had, and I was fine with that. But now…” he trails off, looking for words again. “Now, I don’t ever want to be alone again.”

Something prickles hotly at the edges of John’s vision and he tries his hardest to ignore it. “Do you think you’ll use again?” he asks instead, as a way to keep Sherlock from noticing the slight sheen to his eyes and the roughness of his voice.

“No,” Sherlock says quickly, simply, as if there is no doubt in his mind. “Because now I have you.”

“Yes,” John agrees with a smile that is tight from held-back tears. He would stop at nothing, he
knows, to burn away every last trace of pain, emptiness, and loneliness from Sherlock’s life. To burn away everything that ever haunted Sherlock, so that the boy would never feel the need to hurt himself or run away and hide ever again. “Now you have me. And I’m never letting you go, Sherlock,” he promises with a kiss that is full of a deep, slow, steady fire.

When John pulls away from Sherlock, he keeps their faces pressed close to each other. He closes his eyes and simply breathes Sherlock in, holding him, keeping him, never letting him go. They lie there for a long time, finally letting sleep take them. Just as he starts to drift off, he hears Sherlock’s voice in the darkness whisper to him softly, “I love you with every beat of my worn-out heart, John.”

And he understands completely what Sherlock means, because that is exactly how John feels as well.

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In his dreams there is sand and sun and blood and death.

There are the endless screams of the men of his battalion dying around him, and there is the searing-hot pain of a bullet exploding through him.

There is the honey-thick, body-warm feel of blood bubbling up all around him, underneath his prone body, making the sand and grit stick to him.

There is the cold, clinical feel of medical-grade steel beneath him, inside of him, piercing him, and the even colder stare of the woman he had loved afterwards, disappointment and disgust so searing that he sometimes wishes he had died on that operating table.

There are the whimpers being torn from his throat as he thrashes about, and the sound of words being spoken from far away.


He can hear someone calling his name, but it’s the middle of the night and the voice is soft and kind so he figures it is part of his dream, a better part that he has never had before. Mary doesn’t speak like that to him during these dark hours. No one speaks to him like that. No one except for —

He jerks awake with a gasp, hands coming up to grasp at something that he doesn’t realise he is reaching out for, but they make contact with Sherlock’s body and hold on tight. Sherlock’s hands clench back just as tightly. It is too dark in the bedroom to see anything, but John can feel Sherlock dragging him towards his body, wrapping long, lanky arms protectively around John’s shaking frame.

“Shh, it’s all right,” Sherlock soothes, one hand coming up to card through sweat-soaked hair while the other stays wrapped around John’s shoulders. “It’s all right now.”

John doesn’t want to, but he can’t help himself when he ends up clinging to Sherlock desperately, shoving his dripping face into the crook between Sherlock’s neck and shoulder, smearing sweat and tears along Sherlock’s skin. He heaves great gasping breaths that he tells himself aren’t sobs and tries to get himself under control.

He doesn’t want Sherlock to see him like this. He doesn’t ever want Sherlock to see him like this. Sherlock, however, doesn’t seem to mind in the slightest. “You’re safe, John,” Sherlock whispers
to him gently, petting him. “You’re here, with me. It was just a dream. That’s all. Just a dream. You’re fine.”

John trembles in Sherlock’s arms and thinks about Mary and how she turns away from him during times like this. Then he thinks about Sherlock and how the teen is holding him so close, stroking his hands soothingly up and down John’s back and whispering softly to him in the dark, letting him know everything is going to be okay. He thinks about how he tries to be stoic after a nightmare so that he doesn’t disturb Mary sleeping next to him. He thinks about how scared he is every time—every single fucking time—and how he has to lie in his bed alone and in the dark and do nothing but breathe through his terror and try his hardest not to fall apart.

Then he thinks about how he can fall apart in front of Sherlock, and how he knows with absolute certainty—more than he has ever known anything in his entire life—that Sherlock will put him back together. That Sherlock will hold him after it is all said and done and tell him that everything is going to be okay.

“I’m right here, you’re here with me,” Sherlock says to him softly in the dark. “It’s okay. I’ve got you.”

And John falls back into an easy sleep, knowing that Sherlock does, truly, have him.
### You Set Me on Fire, and I've Never Been More Alive

**Chapter Notes**

Warnings: Erm, there’s some hardcore face fucking at the beginning of this chapter. Like, literal face fucking. I regret nothing…

This chapter has unrealistic marathon sex, but I am the puppet-master and I make it happen :) Beta’d by Indelible_Ink and iriswallpaper. Chapter title comes from the song "Battle Scars" by Guy Sebastian and Lupe Fiasco.

John wakes up in the morning, his head fuzzy from sleep and his cock hard and straining from the warm wetness that surrounds it.

It takes him a moment to shake the last vestiges of slumber from his mind and realise that he is, in fact, not dreaming—there is a lump of undulating duvet between his legs and he can feel fingers clenching and unclenching around his legs, tiny little exhales of breath grown hot and moist under the heat of the blanket.

“God, Sherlock,” John moans as the boy gives him a particularly deep suck, his voice still rough and gravelly from sleep. It has been a long time since he last had a lazy morning blow job like this—since it’s been shy kitten-licks and soft sucking while his body is still warm and pliant from slumber. He has forgotten how good it feels; that loose-limbed, languid feeling of sleep fading away and being replaced with the deep-burn tightening of arousal. Sherlock’s mouth slides down the length of him again, all the way, until John can feel the tip of his prick pressing up against the back of Sherlock’s throat and Christ, how did Sherlock get so fucking good at sucking cock?

Sherlock slowly pulls off of him, lingering on every vein as he goes, every crevice. When he gets to the top of John’s prick he doesn’t let the man slip of out his mouth. Instead, he lets his tongue dip into the slit and lap up the liquid he finds there, wrapping his lips perfectly around the head as he gives a gentle suck.

“Fuck, you’re killing me, love,” John groans out, unable to stand it a second longer. As much as he loves teasing, and early morning blow jobs, and taking things slow, John has also come to find that he loves taking what he wants from Sherlock, as well. Mostly because Sherlock is so willing to give it to him.

So he reaches beneath the covers to grab Sherlock’s shoulders, hauling Sherlock back up the bed and rolling them over. He switches their positions until Sherlock is lying in the spot that John has just vacated, still warm and indented from his body, and John is on top of him. John crawls over his slender body until he is straddling the slim chest, his knees just below Sherlock’s armpits, pushing Sherlock’s arms up so that he can’t get a firm grasp on anything.

Sherlock looks up at him, surprised for a moment. John has never put them in a position like this before, where John is in such a dominating stance over him. John is generally—given a few mostly-recent exceptions—overtly gentle with Sherlock, scared of hurting him. But John would be lying if he said that this weekend hasn’t taken all of his self-control and thrown it out the bloody window.
Still, he would never do something that made Sherlock uncomfortable. So he slowly reaches a hand down to run along the side of Sherlock’s face, flushed from the heat of being underneath the duvet for so long while sucking John’s cock. “Is this okay, love?” he asks lowly, looking down at Sherlock.

Sherlock stares unblinkingly into his eyes and nods silently.

John just smiles, his still-hard prick jumping as he moves into a better position, settling more comfortably onto Sherlock’s chest as he carefully keeps his weight off of the brunet and mostly on his knees. Like this, he can push his hips forward just a little bit and have his stiff shaft hang over Sherlock’s face in the perfect spot for him to suck it, or he can pull back and have a clear view of Sherlock below him. John imagines what Sherlock would look like with his face covered in John’s come, if he were to wank over Sherlock’s body in this position.

Both options are equally enticing but his cock throbs pitifully as it rests against Sherlock’s throat when he remembers the warm wetness of Sherlock’s mouth, and John’s mind is made up.

John works his thumb in between Sherlock’s lips and forces his jaw open. Sherlock tries to lick at his finger, but John presses the tip of it harder against Sherlock’s tongue, stilling him. “Just open that pretty mouth for me, sweetheart.” Sherlock obeys and John can feel his jaw slackening, can see Sherlock open up wider for him. He looks beautiful, waiting to be mouth-fucked. “Yes, perfect. Stay like that, don’t move.”

He goes slowly, gently, the way he always does with Sherlock because the boy looks so fragile in the early morning light, lying back against John’s white sheets while he straddles Sherlock’s chest. His pale skin looks like porcelain, his hair fanned out around him looks like fine thread, his wide eyes staring up at John look like glass, and his pink, heart-shaped mouth wrapped around John’s cock deserves to be fucked softly, slowly. It deserves to be savoured.

So John slides the tip of his cock past the open hole of Sherlock’s mouth, watching as the head slowly disappears bit by bit. John holds his prick still at that point, not moving, but he brings a hand down to wank himself a little bit. He lets Sherlock feel the way John’s foreskin moves against his parted lips, lets Sherlock’s breaths hit the head of his cock in heavy pants as Sherlock continues to stare up at the blond motionlessly, because John told him to stay still.

“Such a good boy,” John sighs in pleasure. “Want the rest of it, baby?”

Instead of nodding, Sherlock opens his mouth wider, sticking his tongue out slightly, letting it caress the underside of John’s cock as it comes out. John groans and dips more of his cock into Sherlock’s mouth but then drags it back out, along with a whine from Sherlock. Underneath his body, John can feel the brunet squirming impatiently.

“Shh, shh,” John shushes him, bringing his unoccupied hand down to caress Sherlock’s face. Sherlock looks torn between nuzzling into John’s palm and lifting his head up to take in more of the man’s cock. But John pops the head of his prick out from between Sherlock’s lips and takes himself in his hand. Sherlock moans at the loss, but John doesn’t go very far. His dick slips out of Sherlock’s wet mouth and John thrusts his hips gently, rubbing his cock along Sherlock’s face, using one hand to guide his prick where he wants it to go and the other to keep Sherlock in place.

Below him Sherlock bucks his hips up into nothing. John is straddling his chest and Sherlock’s arms are trapped above John’s thighs so there is not even the hope of friction anywhere near Sherlock’s cock.

John smiles wickedly and thrusts against Sherlock’s face again.
This time Sherlock sticks his tongue out as John drags his cock back down, managing to twirl the tip of it around the head of John’s prick as it goes. John grunts in satisfaction at the fleeting feeling.

“You love it, don’t you?” John asks, voice husky with arousal and the last remnants of sleep. “You want to suck my cock so badly.”

Sherlock only stares at him and nods, mouth still open because John never told him to close it.

“Jesus,” John breathes out, and he moves both of his hands to the sides of Sherlock’s face, letting his cock hang freely over the open mouth while he strokes Sherlock’s cheeks softly with his fingers.

“I love you so much,” he whispers down to Sherlock, softly, looking him straight in the eye before he thrusts his hips again and lets his cock drag up Sherlock’s face. John smears precome and spit along Sherlock’s chin, his lips, his cheek, his nose, the corner of his eye, his forehead…before dragging back down slowly, slowly, slowly, until the head reaches Sherlock’s patiently waiting mouth and John finally slips back inside, groaning at the heat and wetness and suction.

Sherlock sighs around him and sucks, pressing his tongue along the underside and dragging it down as John pushes farther into him. John’s hands still cup his face, feeling the way Sherlock’s cheeks hollow as he sucks him. It is beautiful.

“Fuck,” he whispers, and he has to pull out again because if he doesn’t he’s afraid he may come. Sherlock glares up at him as John leaves his mouth empty once more, and John can’t help but chuckle slightly.

“Don’t worry, baby,” he says softly, bringing a thumb around to wipe at some spittle that is dripping out of the corner of Sherlock’s mouth. “You’ll get it back.”

He dips his thumb into the edge of Sherlock’s mouth, bringing his other one up to do the same, pressing gently so that Sherlock has no choice but to open wider for John, as wide as he can go now. John can see the delicate, thin skin at the very corners of his mouth go translucent as it stretches, and John presses his thumbs down against the plump fat of Sherlock’s bottom lip, pressing it into his teeth. He takes one more moment to drag his cock along the length of Sherlock’s face—one more chance to see his prick laid out across Sherlock’s eyes and nose and mouth. His balls press heavily against Sherlock’s chin as he pushes to get the tip of his prick as far across Sherlock’s forehead as it will go.

And then he pulls back just as suddenly and plunges his cock into Sherlock’s waiting mouth, his thumbs still holding the boy open and pressing into the sides of his shaft as he fucks Sherlock’s face. He thrusts into the wet, maddening heat of Sherlock relentlessly, pushing in deep, hearing Sherlock gag, and fuck it if that isn’t the loveliest sound John has ever heard.

He can feel his orgasm building, rising up at the base of his spine, deep within him. There is a slickness between John’s thumbs and Sherlock’s lips as spit runs down his chin while John’s cock fucks his mouth, wetting everything and making a mess. Sherlock finally manages to swallow awkwardly against some of the saliva that has built up in his mouth, and John can feel the contractions of Sherlock’s throat around his cock, and he is lost. He shoots his load with barely more than a grunted, “Fuck, coming,” and shoves his prick deep into Sherlock’s mouth as his mind goes white and fuzzy around the edges. It is the first time he has ever come down Sherlock’s throat, and it feels amazing.
Sherlock chokes on his mouthful, coughing and spluttering adorably, but that’s understandable—it’s not easy swallowing for the first time, and Sherlock is on his back. Of course there is bound to be a bit of a mess. John is quick to pull out of him, letting him breathe and swallow as best he can. There is spit and some left over semen that he hadn’t managed to take that is now covering his chin and lips, dripping down one cheek lewdly.

John thinks he looks completely wrecked and absolutely beautiful in the bright morning light.

He shuffles over to lie on top of Sherlock, careful not to put all of his weight on him, and drops his face down to Sherlock’s, close but not quite touching yet. He nuzzles Sherlock’s clean cheek for a bit, nosing at it and kissing it softly, then moving on to trail kisses over to Sherlock’s wet lips. John spends a moment tasting himself there before finally licking at the corner of Sherlock’s mouth, where most of his mess is. He dips his tongue down to clean off Sherlock’s dirty cheek as well, where some more come has dribbled down out of his mouth.

“Someone’s a messy eater,” he chides Sherlock jokingly. His voice is barely above a whisper, they are so close to one another. “We’ll have to teach you some table manners.”

“I’ll let you teach me anything you want,” Sherlock pants against him, “just please let me come.”

John smiles at that. He loves when Sherlock begs for him. “Do you want me to suck you, too?”

“God, yes, please.”

John doesn’t waste any time sliding down Sherlock’s body, biting teasingly at Sherlock’s nipples and laving them with attention until they are hard peaks straining against the chill of the room, wet and slick from John’s treatment. He takes one gently in his teeth while he pinches the other between his fingers for only a moment before he can’t wait any longer to have Sherlock in his mouth. When he gets to Sherlock’s cock, John sees that he is already so stiff that it looks as if he has been hard for hours; his balls are drawn up so tight that they are already hard and red beneath John’s fingers.

“Christ, look at you,” John says, amazed at the sight before him. “Do you like sucking my cock that much?” He doesn’t think he’ll ever get used to the way Sherlock reacts to him. So responsive, so sensitive. No one that John has ever been with has ever reacted this way to his body before, to being with him.

“John, please, just—” Sherlock cries out, his whole body thrashing about on the bed as he slams his eyes shut and tosses his head back, shameless now in his desperation.

John just grips Sherlock’s hips harshly, though, stilling him. He wants to hear Sherlock say it. “Not until you tell me how much you love it. Tell me, Sherlock.”

And Sherlock is so mindless with need that he gives in without a second thought, pushing against John’s hands, trying frantically to get some friction against his straining, reddened cock. “Yes, yes, I love it,” he gasps out, eyes opening and going wide as he glances up at John, looking at him with that penetrating, intense stare. “I love it so much. I love having your cock in my mouth, sucking you, tasting you—fuck!”

John slides his mouth over Sherlock’s slender cock as he is talking, taking him all the way down to the back of his throat in one go. Sherlock stops speaking almost immediately, biting his lip to keep in the small noises that are trying to make their way out, to keep in the words, and John won’t have any of that.
He pulls off and looks back up at Sherlock. “Keep going,” John orders him, and waits for Sherlock to start talking again before he takes Sherlock back into his mouth.

“I love it when you fuck my mouth.” Sherlock gasps as John works over his cock, bringing a hand up to help as he mouths wetly at Sherlock’s tip, lapping up the copious amount of precome that Sherlock is leaking freely now. “I love…I love….Oh God—!”

Sherlock clamps his thighs unexpectedly around John’s head and the man flails slightly around his mouthful of cock and the sudden taste of semen that explodes against his tongue, flooding his mouth.

“Sorry!” Sherlock gasps, breathless. “I’m sorry, I should have warned you but…couldn’t…”

John hadn’t expected him to come just then and the head of Sherlock’s cock hadn’t been far enough back in John’s throat for him to contain most of the mess, but he swallows as much of it as he can. He chuckles as he licks his lips and runs the back of his hand across his mouth to wipe off the rest, then again with his other hand to be sure he got everything. It’s all a bit slick and messy, and John absolutely loves it because it’s Sherlock. “You don’t ever have to be sorry for that, love,” John tells him as he crawls back up the bed and lies next to him, planting soft, wet kisses across Sherlock’s bare shoulders. “You don’t ever have to be sorry for letting me make you lose control. It’s lovely and I want it to happen constantly.”

They lie in bed for a moment longer, trying to slow the heaving of their chests. When their breathing has returned to normal John sits up.

“Breakfast, then?” he asks with a smile on his face.

* *

Breakfast isn’t as eventful as it had been the previous morning (John is a man, not a machine, after all) but he does end up swallowing a pill before his meal. It is his last day with Sherlock, and he knows that they will be practically inseparable. He can feel it in the way that the two of them cling to each other, in the way they lie next to each other. It is blatantly apparent in the way that they sit close to one another on the sofa as they watch some horrible telly programme that neither one of them is really paying attention to, and the way that they rearrange themselves into John’s too-small chair. John knows that he wants to spend as much time as he can today fucking Sherlock.

He knows the pill doesn’t actually work miracles, and he has been having so much sex the past couple of days that he really is surprised that his body still has the physiological ability to become aroused and ejaculate, but everything seems to be fine. It takes a little while before he recovers enough, but he can tell when the pill works through his system:

They are sitting in his chair while the telly is on some ridiculous crime drama that Sherlock is completely ripping to shreds. Sherlock is curled up in his lap like a gigantic house cat, warm and soft and languid. John can feel the weak stirrings of arousal low in his belly as Sherlock squirms and wiggles, trying to find a more comfortable spot for his bony arse, and John finds that he rather likes the feeling of this slow build. It is a constant, consistent warm ember of arousal that sparks abruptly as Sherlock rubs across John’s groin intermittently, only to cool back down to a simmering heat as Sherlock grows still and comfortable once again. John watches Sherlock’s profile in the dim lighting of the telly and the early afternoon sun seeping in through the curtains, and he wonders just how long he can keep this low burn going.

He leans forward slightly, just enough to catch Sherlock’s lips with his own. Sherlock is surprised, not expecting the kiss, but he turns his body into John’s willingly enough as he sits on his lap and
opens himself up to the man. Sherlock’s arms come up to wrap around John’s neck and John enjoys the taste of him, the feel of Sherlock pressed so tightly, so warmly against him. John can feel his cock stirring in his lap, heavy and sluggish. The arousal sparks through his body minimally, pleasantly. His tongue dips into Sherlock’s mouth lazily, licking softly, and everything turns slick and wet and sweet for a moment.

They kiss that way for a long time, like teenagers snogging in their parent’s house, smiling secretly and giggling at each other as they come up for air. Hands roam indolently over each other but no one tries taking off any clothes (as minimal as the garments are—they have been in pyjamas when they have bothered to get dressed at all). Sherlock seems to realise what it is that John is doing; he can most likely feel the soft, slow growth of John’s erection while he sits in John’s lap. They kiss and kiss and kiss, and John loves every second of it, feeling like he would be content with his life if this was all he ever got to do. Sherlock sighs against his mouth sweetly, pressing a kiss to each corner, before he begins to move in earnest on John’s lap, swinging a leg around and straddling John now. His movements suddenly turn their sweet, innocent, slow kisses into something deeper, more urgent.

Like this, John can tell that Sherlock is completely hard; it feels like he has been for some time. John’s own erection is still at half-mast, but as Sherlock grinds down into him he can feel the blood pumping through him a little faster. His heart beat increases incrementally and his cock engorges just a little further.

John has always enjoyed Sherlock on top of him. The weight of him, the press, the feel. Sherlock has only ever sat in his lap this way a few times, and in bed they hardly ever do anything in this position before John flips them over. He doesn’t know why. He loves it, certainly. Maybe he is just afraid that Sherlock—innocent, still slightly-virginal Sherlock—will be uncomfortable with the implications of it. John doesn’t want Sherlock to feel pressured into doing anything and this position certainly puts a lot of attention on Sherlock’s actions. So John will savour it while he can. He wraps his arms around Sherlock’s back, pulling him in close, and presses Sherlock against his chest. Then he immediately tilts his head up so that John can kiss the brunet deeper, taste more of him.

He thrusts up into Sherlock and makes him gasp, long fingers digging into John’s shoulders briefly. John can feel himself against Sherlock’s groin; he is almost completely hard now. Sherlock can feel it too—he shimmies out of John’s arms and slides down the man’s body, out of his chair and down between John’s legs. John sucks in a sharp breath and spreads his knees to accommodate his lover.

He stares down at Sherlock while the boy looks at him, never breaking eye contact. John’s hands come up of their own accord to run through dark, curly hair, gripping it. Christ he can’t believe how much sex the two of them have had over the past couple of days already, and how much he still wants to have more.

It can’t possibly be healthy.

But screw healthy, he thinks as Sherlock slowly pushes the band of his boxers down and pulls out his cock, almost entirely stiff now. John groans and his head drops heavily to the back of his chair, eyes squeezing shut as he feels the warm heat of Sherlock’s mouth at his head.

Sherlock sucks him much the same as he had that morning—softly, slowly. He lets John grow fully hard in his mouth, bringing him gradually to complete arousal in an unhurried, leisurely manner, as if he could stay on his knees and suck John’s cock all day long.

John wonders, for what feels like the millionth time, how this boy is real.
When John is finally fully hard, stiff and red and wet with Sherlock’s spit, the brunet pulls off of him. Sherlock rests his head on John’s thigh as he looks up at the blond, eyes clear and thoughtful, his hand pumping at John’s saliva-slicked cock absently.

John stares back at him and waits for words that he knows are coming.

And when they finally do, they are spoken quiet and soft into the stillness of the room. “I can love you better than her, you know,” he tells John, their eyes never parting.

Sherlock looks so vulnerable, down on his knees in front of John, his head resting on John’s thigh. As if he is trusting John to take care of him completely. It breaks John’s heart to see him so submissive, and at the same time it makes his cock twitch with a dark desire. “Yeah. I know,” John says with a sad smile. He moves a hand from the armrest of his chair and brings it back to card his fingers through Sherlock’s wild curls again, then down to run across his soft cheek.

Sherlock hums happily and lifts his head from John’s thigh, moving back to mouth along John’s cock, licking wet stripes up and down it. “Would you leave her, if I asked you to?” he wonders, looking up at John from his knees. Sherlock’s eyes are wide and his mouth hangs open at the end of his sentence, his tongue caressing the underside of John’s cock as he talks.

God, John can barely think straight, why is Sherlock talking to him about this right now? Why is Sherlock asking him this question? John’s heart stutters in his chest for a moment because this is the first time that Sherlock has asked him this question since their argument, after which he didn’t want John to bring it up again. This is also the first time that Sherlock has posed their situation in a clear “yes” or “no” question, and he doesn’t know what to say at that exact moment. He is slightly taken aback by the straightforwardness of Sherlock’s words. Sherlock, however, wants an answer this time; John can see it in the look in his piercing eyes as John stares down at him.

“Are you asking me to?” John asks back instead, licking his lips and swallowing. He’ll tell Sherlock his decision, if that is what Sherlock needs to hear. The words are poised on the tip of his tongue but his stomach still flutters with nervous butterflies. It would be a big step—it would change things—to finally commit himself wholeheartedly to Sherlock this way, he knows. He would be giving himself so completely to Sherlock, when some part of him is still worried that he isn’t good enough for the boy, and Sherlock will realise that and end up leaving him in the end.

There is a long stretch of silence between them where neither says anything, and Sherlock doesn’t move. He simply lets John’s cock sit in his mouth and stares up at John from his knees, face blank and open. And then he pulls away slowly, gently, twirling his tongue around the head as he goes. When his mouth is no longer occupied, he simply says, “Fuck me. Right now, I’m asking you to fuck me.”

John’s heart stutters in his chest—in relief, in arousal, in disappointment. But John has never denied Sherlock anything and he isn’t about to start right now.

He pushes up in his chair, standing and pulling Sherlock along with him by the teen’s arm. His pants are already halfway down his thighs so he shucks them off, tossing his vest as well, and then quickly divests Sherlock of the minimal amount of clothing he is wearing, too. He takes Sherlock back upstairs and into bed, lying them down on sheets that are in desperate need of washing. But Mary is coming home tonight, so one more tumble on soiled linens will have to do; he will start the wash before she has a chance to do it herself tonight.

They continue kissing as they had in the chair downstairs, deep kisses that leave John’s cock sitting heavy between them and Sherlock breathless beneath him. Sherlock grips John’s bare shoulders and digs his short nails in deep, bucking up against John and rubbing their cocks together, moaning
wantonly into the man’s mouth.

“God, you’re just gagging for it, aren’t you?” John says as he pushes back against Sherlock’s thrusts. He means for it to come out as a joke, but he sounds completely wrecked, just as desperate as Sherlock does. “I told you that once you had my cock up that tight little arse you would never want me to stop fucking you.” Sherlock lets loose a whine of agreement in the back of his throat, pressing his groin up against John’s and rubbing them together, his legs straining against the bed to hold himself up. “Don’t worry, love, I’ll give it to you,” John reassures him, pressing him softly back down into the bed. “I’ll give you what you need.”

“Yes, John,” Sherlock gasps out, hair fanned out against the pillows and his eyes glazed over. “Give it to me.”

John starts by slipping a wet finger, slick with lube from the bottle rolling around amongst the sheets, into Sherlock’s willing body. Over the course of two days, Sherlock has become better acclimatised to being penetrated, but John knows that first breach is always strange. John kisses away Sherlock’s strangled gasp, licking into his mouth, lapping up the sounds Sherlock makes. Against his belly, he can feel Sherlock’s prick twitch as John unerringly finds his prostate, massaging it in little circular motions that has Sherlock bucking and grinding his slim hips in a movement that leaves John’s mouth dry. John slips a second finger into Sherlock as he reaches out with his other hand to wrap his fingers around the heavy weight of Sherlock’s cock, the shaft throbbing and leaking copiously in his grip as he strokes. John doesn’t think he will ever get over just how much precome Sherlock produces; the boy is always so wet, yet his orgasms never seem to lack for it. John’s fingers slide through the clear liquid, dragging his thumb over the tip of Sherlock’s cock. He presses against the bottom of the head and squeezes so that an upwelling of fluid rises out, and Sherlock chokes out a strangled noise as John simultaneously presses into his prostate.

John pushes a third finger into Sherlock, stretching him widely at a speed that seems too slow but that he simultaneously worries may be too fast. He doesn’t ever want to hurt Sherlock, yet even though he has fucked Sherlock almost nonstop for the past two days, it seems like John can’t ever wait long enough to make sure he is properly stretched before wanting to slide his cock into him. But John forces himself to take a deep breath and slow down. He rubs his hand up along Sherlock’s shaft and across his groin, up Sherlock’s soft belly and over his side soothingly as John continues to stretch and prep him for just a little while longer. John watches the younger male closely as Sherlock writhes against his hands, face flushed and lips swollen and red from his teeth.

John pulls his fingers from Sherlock and takes a ragged breath, fumbling with the bottle of lubricant once more as he slicks up his cock and rewets Sherlock’s loosened entrance. Then he kneels in front of Sherlock, between his spread legs. At this, though, Sherlock surges up suddenly, his mouth smashing against John’s without warning. John is stunned motionless for a moment before he finds himself kissing back, Sherlock’s lips hungry and furtive against his own in a way he has not felt before.

He can feel Sherlock’s hands on his shoulders, and the other male flips them over suddenly. John is so surprised that he lets it happen, doesn’t fight it. Before he knows it, he is lying on his back with Sherlock straddling him, looking down at him from above, his lips red with a wicked desire.

John inhales a sharp breath, holds it, doesn’t let it go. They’ve never done this before. He’s thought about it—God, how he’s thought about it. There have been plenty of times, frenzy-fuelled wanks late at night, where he has thought of Sherlock sitting on top of him while John fucks into him, Sherlock riding him wantonly. But he hadn’t expected it to happen this weekend.
“Sherlock,” he starts, voice catching in his throat, “you don’t have to—”


Sherlock pushes up slightly onto his knees, reaching a hand blindly behind him to grip John’s cock, holding it steady. John’s whole body tenses as he realises what Sherlock is doing, what is about to happen. He can feel the heat of Sherlock’s body against the head of his prick as Sherlock slowly sinks backwards towards his lap, his bright gaze locked on John’s. The tip slips past Sherlock’s tight, wet entrance and John closes his eyes. His head drops back to the pillow with a groan but he quickly lifts it up again, staring back at Sherlock. He can barely keep his eyes open from the pleasure of it, but he has to watch, doesn’t want to miss a moment of it. He has to witness his own undoing.

Sherlock gasps out a strangled moan as he sinks slowly down John’s cock in increments. The angle is different from what they are used to, deeper; the weight of Sherlock’s body is behind it, and the teen goes slowly, so slowly, as if he is afraid of the pleasure he is feeling. His hair is plastered to his forehead with sweat, his cheeks are flushed a blotchy red and his eyes are completely glazed over—John doesn’t think he has ever seen Sherlock look as gorgeous as he does when he is sitting on John’s cock.

“Fuck, Sherlock,” he says, running his hands along Sherlock’s trembling sides, the pale body shaking with the effort of holding himself up above John. “You feel amazing.”

Sherlock looks down at him, completely wrecked. “Tell me,” Sherlock says, and he sounds as if he is begging. “Tell me how lovely you think I am. Tell me how I drive you crazy. Tell me you love me. Please, John, tell me.”

“God,” John gasps out brokenly. He can feel Sherlock slide down a little bit more, impaling himself farther on John’s aching prick. The man wants so desperately to thrust up, to enter that inviting heat, but he forces himself to stay still, instead running his hands reverently over every piece of Sherlock he can reach. “So beautiful, so good. Love you so much. Love you, please,” he pleads, rocking his hips slightly in a silent supplication.

Sherlock moans at the feeling, enjoying it. He raises himself up along John’s cock, lifting his hips experimentally before sliding back down, taking more of the man than he has ever done, making them both groan. Sherlock seems to like the sensation of it rather a lot, because he does it again, lifting up and then pressing back down, taking almost all of John’s length now. He is all reckless abandon, squirming delightfully on the man’s prick, until John sinks in deeper and Sherlock gasps sharply as John hits that perfect spot inside of him. Little shudders and shivers wrack Sherlock’s body as he shakes with the effort of holding still for a long moment, getting used to the pleasure of it.

“God, John,” Sherlock sobs as he throws his head back, exposing the long line of his throat. John is held prisoner helplessly beneath him, unable to move. “More. Need all of you. Now.” Sherlock is greedy in bed like the impatient child that he is and he tries to sink completely onto John’s cock, but he has tensed up slightly in his insatiability. John can feel the pressure of the brunet’s muscles like a vice gripping him, and he knows Sherlock will only end up hurting himself if he tries to push himself any further without any help.

So John takes hold of Sherlock’s hips firmly and spreads his knees wider, bracing his feet and opening his thighs, allowing Sherlock’s weight to settle more firmly onto his lap. “Getting there, you greedy little thing,” he grits out as he lets the teen sink deeper onto him. He feels the slick skin of Sherlock’s entrance slide wetly over to engulf him completely, Sherlock’s body finally enveloping his own fully.
They both gasp and still as their bodies finally connect, thighs to groin. Sherlock stops moving to get used to the sensation. John stops moving because he is afraid that if he were to stir at all he would come immediately, embarrassingly. He has imagined what it would feel like to have Sherlock right where the boy is now, riding him, and never in all his wildest fantasies has he ever thought it would feel this wonderful.

Sherlock wiggles experimentally on top of him and John inhales a sharp breath.

“Fuck, love, you have to be still,” he pleads as his hands shoot up to grip Sherlock’s hips harshly.

“No,” Sherlock puffs as he continues to squirm incessantly in tiny little mind-blowing movements.

“Can’t.”

John’s going to come, he just knows it. Sherlock keeps moving, and John can’t stand it a moment longer and he is going to orgasm, and this will all be over too soon, and John won’t even have gotten the chance to know what it is like to have Sherlock ride him. John holds back something that sounds disturbingly like a sob. What has he ever done in his life, he wonders, to deserve to be tortured with a lap full of impatient, infuriating, insanely beautiful—

“Don’t,” Sherlock begs, shaking his head as he looks down at John pleadingly. “Don’t come yet.”

“Then stay still, for fuck’s sake,” John growls out, clamping his fingers down around Sherlock’s bony hips. Sherlock listens to him—finally—and John revels in the long minutes he takes to get his body back under control. He breathes deep and slow, acclimatising himself to the feel of Sherlock around him, tight and hot and amazing.

When he finally feels as though he can move and not shoot his load prematurely, he gives an experimental thrust of his hips, providing Sherlock no warning. Sherlock gasps at the sudden movement, muscles flexing and clenching around John’s cock in surprise, fluttering softly.

“Oh, yes,” John moans as he starts up a regular rhythm, rocking Sherlock back and forth on top of him.

Sherlock bites his lip and lets the motion of John’s thrusts move him. He fucks himself on John’s cock steadily, wincing slightly as his weight and gravity impale him deeper on John’s cock than he has ever been.

“Take it,” John tells him, staring up at Sherlock, mesmerised by the way the plump flesh of his bottom lip has turned white from the pressure of his teeth on it. “Show me that you can take it, like a good boy. I know you can. You want to be good for me, don’t you?” He asks as he fucks up into Sherlock harder, making the teen cry out, shoving himself in deeper. Sherlock takes him all the way in. “Yes, just like that,” John croons, running his hands up and down Sherlock’s sweat slicked sides. “There’s my good boy.”

“J-John!” Sherlock cries out, his hard cock bobbing and leaking onto John’s stomach between them.

John looks up at Sherlock above him and his mind spins. Moisture has gathered on Sherlock’s eyelashes from having them squeezed shut so tight and sweat has plastered his hair down to his forehead and the nape of his neck. Sherlock’s entire body has gone pink with the exertion of fucking himself up and down on John’s cock, and the sight of him literally steals John’s breath away.

No one else, John knows, has ever, will ever, have Sherlock this way. He is the first, the last, the
only one.

“...in his own pleasure. “Gorgeous. Absolutely amazing. You take my cock so well. Like you were made for it. Made just for me.”

“...taking the teen’s engorged prick in his hand, stroking him slowly. “...you... Only you.”

“...tight and rigid. He is leaking heavily onto John’s stomach, leaving trails of warm, clear liquid that the head of his cock smears between them. Sherlock is close, John knows, so close. “God, look at you, you gorgeous thing,” John tells the teen on top of him. “My beautiful boy.”

The heat of Sherlock’s body is indescribable, gripping John’s cock like a vice. Sherlock slides up and down him, the movement slick and smooth, and John can feel every twitch and clench of Sherlock’s muscles around him. He struggles to breathe through the unbelievable pleasure of it, gripping Sherlock’s hips tighter as he feels Sherlock grind down on him.

“...Watching you like this,” John grits out, voice breathy and hopeless. “...Sherlock, I swear to God,” he promises.

At his words, Sherlock finally opens his eyes and looks at him, and if John thought that the boy had looked beautiful before, it is nothing compared to what he sees when Sherlock stares back at him.

Because now Sherlock is looking down at John like he is everything in the world to him.

And for a moment, time stands still. John’s heart stutters to a frightening stop and everything comes crashing down around him, leaving only one blazing solid truth behind that he can’t ignore, that he can’t hide from any longer, that he can’t push away.

This, he thinks. I want this, always. Him, forever. All of him, every bit, ‘til the end of time, not just for a little while after he’s graduated and I’ve finally left my wife. He’s the only thing that makes it all right, that makes everything, even me, better. I won’t ever be able to give him up.

John knows that, although he has made the conscious choice to divorce Mary and to think about being with Sherlock after he graduates, he’s never really thought about the long run. He knows he is a master at carefully avoiding thinking about certain issues until they cause horrendous problems for the two of them, but he also knows he avoids them because he is scared of the answers, of what he actually wants.

But now he knows what he wants. He wants this. For the rest of his life. He knows he won’t be able to give it up. Their latest fight should have made this clear to him, when John became nothing more than a wreck without Sherlock, but John is so skilled at ignoring things he doesn’t want to dwell on. This, though, he knows he can’t ignore any longer. He is completely and utterly lost to Sherlock. John can feel the fire inside of him, the desire to have this boy and keep him for the rest of his life. It burns brighter, pulsing and flaming until there is nothing left of his heart except a mass pyre, all of his good reason and sanity burning at the feet of Sherlock Holmes. John can’t breathe for the power of it.

So, yes, he knows now that he would leave his wife for Sherlock. In a heartbeat, in an instant. Just
not at this particular moment. The planning isn’t right, the timing isn’t safe. There is still too much of the school year left. He wonders how Sherlock would react if John told him that, though, because he knows that Sherlock doesn’t understand those sorts of things, Sherlock would never settle for an answer like that, he would never settle for waiting. And now John finds that not only will he leave his wife for Sherlock, but he wants Sherlock for the rest of his life, as well.

It is all rather overwhelming.

John has come to find that being in love with Sherlock, having him this way, is like being in love with an earthquake or a volcano. It is like loving a force of nature. Something wild and so much larger than John could ever hope to be, than he could ever hope to contain within the inadequate circle of his arms. He is left in awe of the beauty and brilliance before him and he realises now that he can finally let go of that last bit of doubt, of fear, that has kept him from Sherlock completely. Because as much as he thinks he doesn’t deserve Sherlock, he’ll try like hell to prove himself wrong.

John shudders underneath Sherlock, thrusting up into him with abandon, wildly, making Sherlock gasp out loud. He takes the opportunity to pull Sherlock down towards him, press their chests together, take Sherlock’s mouth in a desperate kiss. The new position changes the angle of his thrusts, and Sherlock groans as John slowly presses into him, pushing his hips back and down to meet John’s body. Sherlock shifts so that he can put his weight on his hands, making a space between their stomachs for John to reach into, so that John can grab the teen’s cock and stroke it as Sherlock rides him.

Sherlock feels so fragile above him that John thinks he might shatter the boy if he holds him too tightly, but the desperate fear churns in his stomach that Sherlock will fly away from him if John doesn’t hold him tight enough. He doesn’t know what to do, how to proceed into this new, frightening territory, so he simply continues stroking Sherlock’s cock while his other hand runs incessantly along Sherlock’s side and back, his lips touching every bare piece of flesh that they can.

John can feel it, the moment right before Sherlock comes on top of him. Sherlock cries out and goes rigid, hips stuttering and stalling in their motions against John’s pelvis. He continues to thrust up into Sherlock, stroking him through his orgasm as his own crashes down on top of him. Between them, he can feel Sherlock’s come hit his chest, his stomach, the top of his groin, warm and wet as John feels his own orgasm fill the teen up inside. It feels like John comes forever, his cock twitching out spurt after spurt, and it only continues when Sherlock starts moving on top of him and clenching his muscles, milking John for all he worth.

He groans and lies there, drained and covered in come, as Sherlock lifts himself off of John’s cock. Sherlock leans forward slightly on his knees so that he is still hovering over John as he reaches behind himself, eyes never leaving John’s. John isn’t sure exactly what it is that Sherlock is doing until he works his hand behind himself and gasps slightly, biting his lips. Sherlock’s eyelids flutter shut for a moment before opening again, and John can see the tendons and muscles of his extended arm flexing.

*Jesus Christ*, John thinks as his cock gives a jerky twitch, still hard even though he just came. *No, he can’t be…*

But sure enough, when Sherlock brings his hand back around, his fingers are slick and shiny with a mess of come and lube.

“I like the feeling of your come inside of me when I finger myself afterwards,” he says with a shy smile as he reaches down in between them and slides his dripping fingers teasingly over his own
softening cock. John knows Sherlock is sensitive—he always gets sensitive after he orgasms—but just the implication of Sherlock touching himself again—however lightly—while his wide, wet hole is slowly dripping come onto John’s still-hard dick is enough to have the man panting for breath, cock twitching for another release.

“Fuck,” John moans, grabbing Sherlock by his shoulders and pulling him down roughly for a kiss, his voice completely wrecked. “Fuck, I like the way it feels, too, baby.”

He tears into Sherlock’s mouth, making Sherlock gasp as he falls into John’s body, sliding against the mess that he left on John’s stomach. Beneath him, John grinds his wet cock into the delicate juncture where Sherlock’s thigh meets his hip, making Sherlock hiss a sharp breath at the feel of the still-stiff flesh digging into him.

“John,” he says against the man’s mouth, and his voice is breathy with wonder.

John makes a noise of agreement against Sherlock’s lips. When he can bring himself to pull away from Sherlock, he grins like a loon and says, “These pills are bloody amazing.”

Then he flips them over with every intention of buggering the hell out of Sherlock again.

“John, wait,” Sherlock shouts out, laughing suddenly as John continues to paw at him unceremoniously. “Wait, stop!” He tries to fight John off but can’t between the giggles. “I can’t go again. Seriously.”

At that, John smiles cheekily, grabbing Sherlock’s ankles and spreading his legs as wide as they’ll go while Sherlock tries to kick feebly at him. “Come on,” John says, laughing. “What, can’t keep up with this old man?”

“Twat,” Sherlock says, squirming out of John’s grasp and wiggling across the bed to a safe distance, out of John’s grasp. “Just give me a minute. Unlike you, I’m not pumped full of vasodilators. I’m actually doing this the natural way.”

“Hmm,” John says noncommittally as he chuckles and chases after Sherlock, scrambling across the blankets. “Sucks for you, then.”

When he reaches Sherlock, John pounces on him, attacking him with wet, sloppy kisses that miss their mark and land all over Sherlock’s face. Sherlock giggles and struggles half-heartedly underneath him in a pathetic attempt to get away from the assault.

This is what making love is supposed to feel like, John remembers. For so long whenever he and Mary had sex—when their marriage was rocky but they could still stand to touch each other—it had been because one or both of them had felt a biological need, that pressure in their bodies that let them know a release of endorphins and oxytocin was warranted. It had never been much about pleasing the other person, about wanting to drown them in satisfaction, or needing the other person to know they were loved and wanted and beautiful and cherished. Yet John wants to show Sherlock that he is all of those things. He wants this to be about something more than just a bodily urge to orgasm. This is more. And he will make sure they both enjoy it.

He trails his kisses across Sherlock’s face, down Sherlock’s neck and chest, and then over to his soft belly. John knows that Sherlock is more ticklish than he has ever let on to be, and so John takes the opportunity to pepper warm kisses along Sherlock’s perfect little belly button. Then he inhales a deep breath and, before Sherlock knows what is happening, John blows out a big wet raspberry on Sherlock’s tummy, tickling him and making the boy squawk and squirm against him. Sherlock laughs and wiggles underneath him, John’s still-hard erection responding to every single
one of Sherlock’s movements.

*Who says making love has to be sensual and sexy and erotic,* John thinks to himself as he smiles warmly down at Sherlock. *Why can’t it be this, too? Giggles and playful pushes and breathless laughter?*

God, John has never loved like this before, not ever. It is amazing and heart-lightening and life-affirming. It is bright sunlight streaming in through the window and white sheets crinkling softly as Sherlock moves to twist away from John’s searching hands and the soft, beautiful tinkling of Sherlock’s laughter echoing through the room. This moment is wonderful; this moment is perfect; this moment is precious. John would give anything for this moment to never end.

He thinks about other times he has made love to someone, in the past before his marriage, and then with only Mary afterwards. He remembers that there was always a sense of self-consciousness, even with his wife. Before the Army, John had been slightly fit from playing rugby but he has always been on the short side, in his mind. After he had joined the Army, he had filled out somewhat better, but nothing much could be done about his height. He had always tried to never let it bother him, but when he and Mary were “on a break” (as she was fond of calling it) he always had a tendency to pull people shorter than he was, just so his ego never took a hit. Even after he had married Mary, he never came to that place in their relationship where he felt completely comfortable with his body around her, the way most long-term couples do. And then after he got shot….

As if the gunshot wound weren’t bad enough, John had to put up with the limp as well. That had meant that his left shoulder and right leg were pretty much out of commission for a long time, and various sexual positions were completely out of the equation. John learnt quickly that it is very hard to feel good about yourself when your wife can hardly stand to look at your body and you aren’t physically fit enough to pleasure her the way she wants.

So self-confidence issues are pretty much part and parcel of John’s life now. And he has gotten used to that idea.

Yet with Sherlock, he doesn’t have to worry about that at all. John feels completely comfortable around Sherlock in a way he has never felt around anyone else, ever. When Sherlock looks at him, John doesn’t have that overwhelming urge to twist his body away, to pull the duvet up around himself, to dim the lights or pull the curtains closed when they are making love. He lets Sherlock look at him—Sherlock, with that penetrating stare that sees deeper than any person John has ever known—and he relishes it. He relishes the fact that Sherlock sees him better, clearer, deeper, than any person ever has, and still wants to keep looking at him.

John has honestly never felt so loved before in his life. He has never felt so studied, so torn apart by a look yet so understood at the same time. No one has ever known him like Sherlock does, accepted him—body and mind—like Sherlock has. No one.

This, he finally understands, is what it feels like to be whole at last.

Slowly, their playful touches turn into something softer, calmer. John has stayed hard against Sherlock the entire time, but Sherlock’s body finally begins to respond to his touch again. John knows it will take them both a little while to orgasm, and he is completely fine with that. He is fine with lying on his side next to Sherlock as they stare at each other, kissing. Their bodies are pressed so close to one another that he can wank them both together for what feels like a small eternity until they are both gasping into each other’s mouths and coming against each other’s cocks.
His mind reels from the amount of endorphins his body has produced and released today, and beside him he can feel Sherlock turn over and flop on his back, and John follows Sherlock unconsciously.

“You’ll be the death of me, you know,” John whispers into Sherlock’s shoulder as his face is shoved there, lying on his stomach, half on top of the boy, half on the bed.

Sherlock chuckles beneath him. “You keep saying that, but I highly doubt that it is going to be true.”

“Mmm,” is all John says, because he has the strong feeling that Sherlock is definitely wrong. He finally manages to rouse himself with a grunt of “Going to clean up,” before he heaves himself off of the bed and drags his sore and battered body into the loo for a quick, hot shower.

When he comes back out, he feels halfway human again (and not quite so much like a used up sex machine) and steps into his bedroom, looking up to see—

“Oh for the love of—really, Sherlock?” he asks, his voice loud in the quiet of his bedroom. He stalks across the room and heads straight for where Sherlock is sitting, bony back propped against the headboard and unlit cigarette hanging from his red, kiss-swollen lips.

“What?” Sherlock responds innocently, glancing up from the lighter he has hovering at the tip of his cigarette, frowning deeply at John.

“Nuh-uh,” John says, reaching him and grabbing the cigarette out of his mouth. “Don’t think so. Not gonna happen.”

“I don’t know what you’re talking about,” Sherlock states. He looks up at John with guileless eyes, as if he doesn’t remember that they have had this conversation a million times—no more smoking around John, definitely no smoking in John’s house, no smoking full stop, that’s what the bloody patches are for!

John crushes the cigarette in his hand, being sure not to let the tiny, loose tobacco leaves fall out of his palm. “Don’t play stupid,” he says angrily, tired of Sherlock’s bullshit. “It doesn’t suit you, and I don’t believe it for a second.”

Sherlock looks at him for a moment longer and John thinks he is going to argue with him, but then Sherlock sighs and settles further back against the headboard he is leaning against. “Fine. But I have to do something to keep myself entertained,” he complains petulantly as he watches John walk across the room and toss the cigarette in the rubbish bin by Mary’s vanity.

“Getting shagged left and right not enough for you?” John asks sarcastically, his back to Sherlock as he rubs his hands together to get all of the loose leaves off. “Tired of me already?”

Sherlock just ignores John, burrowing down into the covers instead and looking thoughtful for a moment before he says, “Let’s play a game.” His eyes stay on the man as John walks back towards the bed, crawling in beside him. “John, let’s play murder. Pleeeeeease?” he begs petulantly when John doesn’t answer him, sounding for all the world like the child he tries so hard not to be.

John just sighs. He knows how these games usually end up, and he’s not in the mood to argue with Sherlock over a stupid mistake in a fake murder that may or may not get Sherlock caught in a make-believe scenario. Playing Cluedo with him was bad enough. “No, Sherlock. I don’t want to.”

“Why not?” Sherlock asks him, turning to look at John as the blond lies next to him. He gives
John a contemplative look before asking suddenly, “How would you kill your wife?”

At that, John’s stomach lurches and he sits up immediately in bed, turning to glare witheringly at the boy. “Jesus, Sherlock!” he yells out.

“What? Not good?” Sherlock asks, looking at him with a blank, innocent stare that John doesn’t believe for a second.

“A bit not good, yeah,” he repeats the old line in a mocking tone, narrowing his eyes at Sherlock before slowly turning away from him and lying back down, staring up at the ceiling.

Sherlock is blessedly quiet for a moment and John has never been more thankful before he opens his mouth again, and John feels like he wants to strangle something.

“If it were me, I think that I would probably poison her smoothie in the morning. She is religious about getting one every day—”

“Sherlock!” John bites out, not even bothering to grace the kid with a look this time.

Beside him Sherlock just huffs, crossing him arms over his chest. “You’re absolutely no fun at all, John.”

* 

The room is quiet around them. They have been lying in bed for what feels like forever, all afternoon, simply holding each other. They are still naked, covered up haphazardly with sheets that are bunched and twisted. John is on his back with one arm resting behind his head while Sherlock cuddles up against his side. John’s other arm is around Sherlock’s shoulders, holding him close as Sherlock’s head rests on his chest. Sherlock’s limbs and torso have all slipped naturally into the empty spaces of John’s body, moulding them together. Everything is so comfortable and relaxed. John doesn’t remember a time when he has ever felt this good, this content. Conversation has been sparing, no need for unnecessary words at the moment. They talk only about the things that seem important, the things they want the other to know.

John tells Sherlock about the Army. How it made him feel right, how it made him feel useful. He talks about war and his fellow soldiers and how he thought he was going to die out there.

Sherlock holds him close and kisses him until he stops shaking.

Sherlock tells him about his plans for the future, what he wants to do with his life, who he plans to be, and how he wants to make a difference in the world.

“A consulting detective,” Sherlock whispers quietly into John’s scarred shoulder. “I’ll be the only one in the world.”

John smiles into curly hair that smells faintly of sweat and John’s own shampoo. “You’d be brilliant at it,” he tells Sherlock. “No boss, no one to tell you what to do. Yeah, that’d be perfect for you.”

At that, Sherlock looks up at him, lifting his head minutely and peering at John through his strange heterochromia eyes. They are lying so close together that John can see the hazel specks in them, odd and disconcerting. “You really think I’d be brilliant at it?” Sherlock asks him, and there is a nervousness on his face that John doesn’t think he has seen before.

“Well, yeah,” John tells him, placing a soft kiss on his forehead. “You can be anything you want
to be Sherlock, and I know you’d be brilliant at it. You’re so smart. You can do anything you want. If you want to be a consulting detective, I don’t see how anything would be able to stand in your way.”

He has to remind himself that Sherlock has never had anyone tell him that he can succeed at anything. Sherlock has never had anyone who has pushed him to do his best, to be all that he can be. Sherlock has done everything that he has, gotten to where he is in life—his IQ, his experiments, his schooling—by himself, without the help of anyone. Just some money for bills and clothes in the post from Mycroft. Nothing else. Not even the kind, reassuring words of a friend or loved one telling him that he is doing a good job, that they are proud of him.

John’s heart constricts in his chest and he holds onto Sherlock tighter. They lie in silence for a long while, neither of them speaking again, just content to hold one another and be near each other. John can see the sunlight make its way across his bedroom floor, the bright shine of it going dull and dim as mid-afternoon turns to late afternoon and then turns to early evening.

And still they hold each other.

“Bees,” Sherlock says suddenly as the dusky evening light slowly starts creeping its way out of the bedroom.

John wishes it would never go.

“Mmm, what?” he asks sleepily. They had woken early in the morning and stayed awake all day, not wanting to waste a single moment of their last day together, and he is tired. The rest of the weekend had been spent much the same way: too much excitement and activity, too little sleep. For Sherlock it is not a hardship, for John it is something that he has not done since his days in the Army and his mind is a little foggy around the edges.

“I like bees,” Sherlock repeats softly, watching darkness slowly crawl across the room. His focus is entirely on the dusky light from the setting sun seeping in through the window and John doesn’t like it. It should be on him. Their focus should be on each other.

“Oh really?” he asks, rousing himself with a smile and a rustle of sheets. John heaves himself up on his forearms and crawls over Sherlock, boxing him in underneath John’s bed-warm weight. “Bees, huh? What, like, honey bees?” he asks, nuzzling into Sherlock’s neck and placing sloppy kisses along the skin that he knows is sensitive there. Sherlock giggles sleepily and squirms beneath him.

“Yes, *Apis Mallefera* is the more fascinating of the species,” Sherlock affirms with a sharp intake of breath as John finds a particularly sensitive spot. “I find them quite intriguing. I just thought you should know. I want you to know everything about me. Before this weekend is through.”

John just smiles against his skin, because he feels exactly the same way. But he doesn’t want to think about how this weekend is almost over. Not right now, not when it is so close to ending.

Right now, he wants to spend the last few moments of it getting lost in Sherlock. “I find *you* quite intriguing, Sherlock Holmes,” he whispers against Sherlock’s skin, dragging his lips up Sherlock’s body and back to the soft, plump mouth, kissing him. “My very own little honey bee.”

At that, Sherlock turns away from him, a fake put-upon look on his face that disappears as a laugh takes its place. “John, stop!” he says, trying to be serious and failing entirely.

“What?” John asks innocently, hovering over him.
Sherlock gets himself under control enough to wipe the smile off of his face and give John a stern look. “Enough with the ridiculous pet names!”

“You don’t like that one?” John asks, smiling down at him. He drops his head to give Sherlock another kiss, sweet and close-mouthed. “I’ll stop if you really want me to,” he says earnestly, pulling back slightly.

Sherlock’s breath stutters against his lips, warm and soft. “You don’t have to stop,” he whispers, almost too low for the man to hear.


Sherlock just chuckles against his mouth, wrapping his arms around the man and pulling John down on top of him.

It takes him a long while to get hard, but, honestly, John is surprised that he is able to become erect again at all after the amount of sex he has had today. He doesn’t feel too badly about it, however, because Sherlock is much the same against him.

Neither of them seems to mind, though. They enjoy the soft, sleepy slowness of their movements against one another; the languid, honey-thick push and pull of their bodies rubbing together. They bask in the feeling of hands moving and kisses pressing and legs tangling around one another, of toes trying to interlock with each other. They both know that this is the last time they will be together in John’s bed like this, comfortable and without the fear of being caught. So they cling to one another, desperate to not let this moment go.

They kiss each other, slowly but deeply, tearing into each other reverently. John is completely hard against Sherlock now, and he reaches down between them to bring Sherlock to the same state, gripping them both together and revelling in the feel of Sherlock’s cock pressed so closely against his own. Their mouths never part, and John lets Sherlock hold on to him tightly while John uses his hands to take them both apart for the last time. John pants into Sherlock’s mouth that he loves him, more than anything, and Sherlock whimpers that he wants John, always.

They press against each other and it is sweet, and sad, and beautiful.

John comes again, a pitiful amount of ejaculate spurting out between them in something that could almost be considered a dry orgasm. He knows it is only because of the pill still working its way through his system that he is even able to come again at all. Sherlock probably has his youth going for him, a teenage refractory period and libido that is close to insatiable at this point in his adolescence. John thinks they must be close to quelling it, though, with as much sex as they have had in the past few days. When Sherlock comes, it is with a cry that is almost pained, and a slight grimace that John kisses away slowly. He presses his lips to the wrinkle of Sherlock’s forehead, the corners of each of his eyes, the edges of his pinched mouth, until Sherlock’s face is soft and relaxed once again.

They both lie in bed, sweaty and panting and watching each other as the last vestiges of sunlight fade from the room and leave them in darkness.

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Later that night, he helps Sherlock gather all of his belongings before Mary is due back from her late flight, picking up any trace that Sherlock was ever in the house and making sure nothing is left of him in John’s home. They don’t speak to one another; they can barely look at each other because they know that it will just hurt too much. John doesn’t want him to go, but Mary is due
back at any moment, her plane having landed some time ago. Waiting for her luggage and the cab ride home will buy them a little time, but not much, he knows.

Sherlock knows this, too.

Once Sherlock has everything gathered up, he rucks his school bag with his belongings up to his shoulder and heads to John’s door without a word. John follows silently behind him, feeling almost lost. He doesn’t know what to do—what to say—to make this better, to make this all right. The weekend had been amazing, wonderful, perfect, and John doesn’t want it to end at all, but he definitely doesn’t want it to end like this, with this void between them.

At the door Sherlock turns to say something but John beats him to it. He takes Sherlock tightly in his arms and crushes him to his chest.

“Sherlock, I…” he says into dark curls, but he doesn’t know how to finish it. Instead he pulls away from Sherlock slightly, just enough to look into Sherlock’s face, close as it is to his own height. He brings his hands up to cup Sherlock’s cheeks and he tilts Sherlock’s head down to place a soft kiss to the smooth forehead, above dark-coloured fringe. John kisses the tip of Sherlock’s nose reverently, in the way he knows that Sherlock hates; his lips gently press against Sherlock’s, a barely-there kiss that doesn’t have anything to do with passion or urgency or sex. Sherlock kisses him back and John forgets for a moment that they are supposed to be saying goodbye, that his wife is on her way home, that Sherlock should be leaving. He stands there, by his front door, and holds on tightly to Sherlock, never wanting to let him go.

It is Sherlock who finally pulls away first. He has the most endearing blush on his face and his eyes drop away from John’s and to the door, silently saying that he should go even though they both know that he doesn’t want to.

John understands.

So he lets go of Sherlock and steps away from him, opening the door and letting Sherlock walk through, out of his home and into the dark. The light from John’s front step illuminates the front of his house and his drive, and he watches Sherlock for as long as he can. Eventually, though, the teen slinks off into the darkness, melding into the shadows around him until John can’t see him anymore. So he sighs and shuts the door, locking it behind him before going back upstairs to pull the sheets off of the bed and put new ones on, tossing the soiled linens in the wash, and then going to the master bathroom.

He showers quickly, hating to wash the scent of Sherlock off of him but knowing that he has to. Once he is done, he stands in front of the sink and stares at himself in the mirror for a long time, wondering at what he sees. He looks the same as he always has, he thinks. But different. Happier. His face is still lined and wrinkled, his hair is still greying prematurely, but there is something about him that he has been missing the past few years. Something is back that he had thought he had lost.

He opens the medicine cabinet, searching for a few seconds before he finds what he is looking for: the dull gold wedding ring that he had taken off on Friday morning. It glimmers weakly in his hand as he stares at it for a moment, closing the door to the cabinet before holding the ring up and looking through the hollow thing, seeing his reflection in the mirror through it.

Before he can change his mind, John slips his wedding ring back onto his finger, and he tries to ignore how it feels like a lead weight chaining him back to the ground, crushing him.

John crawls into his bed, so much colder without Sherlock lying next to him, and pretends to be
asleep when Mary comes home.
The first morning that Mary is home again is strange. John feels thrown-off by the presence of his wife back in their house, by someone who is not Sherlock sharing the bedroom and the loo and the kitchen with him. It is strange to feel this way after only spending three days sharing a home with Sherlock, but John can’t help it. It feels like he and Mary are the opposite ends of a pair of magnets, pushing off of each other whenever they come into close proximity with one another instead of being drawn together, like he and Sherlock were all weekend.

Mary, for the most part, though, doesn’t seem to notice any of this.

She is in relatively good spirits after her weekend away from John, and she spends the better part of the morning chatting happily to him about inconsequential things. It seems that whatever she did over the weekend put her in a rather lovely mood, one where she is able to look over and ignore all of the little things about John and their home that would alert her to John’s recent activities. Perhaps it is just that she doesn’t care any longer. However, John doesn’t want to spoil that good mood so he lets her continue to prattle on happily, even going so far as to be sure to pay attention to her. The fact that he may be feeling slightly guilty about his marvellous weekend spent with his teenage lover may have something to do with his attentiveness, as well.

Before they leave, as they are both dancing around each other in the kitchen while gathering keys and donning coats, he accidentally bumps into her when they both try to exit the doorway at the same time. Normally, it wouldn’t be a big deal, but it is the closest that the two of them have been in months (not counting when they sleep), and it seems strange, so he feels the need to say something.

“Sorry, love,” he apologises without thinking, the term of endearment slipping out unconsciously after his long weekend spent with Sherlock.

They both pause at his words, surprise flitting across each of their faces as they stare at one another in silence.

“You haven’t called me that in ages,” Mary whispers to him, a strange look dancing across her face. Then she smiles brightly at him, and for a split second John sees the woman that he married, happy and beautiful, the expression in her eyes full of warmth and love for him.

He hates that he put that look on her face.

She slowly leans up to kiss him, and when she presses her mouth to his all he can do is compare her to Sherlock, the taste of her, the feel. She is cold against him where the memory of Sherlock
still burns bright against his skin, heating him from the inside out. She is so much less, Sherlock is so much more, and John feels disgusted that she is touching him. A tiny little shudder runs through his body that he tries to stop; she is his wife, after all, the woman who he had loved once. It isn’t fair of him to think this way, to feel this way about her just because she wants a physical touch from him. He has an obligation to her still, and he won’t treat her any differently just because he no longer loves her. Just because she is not Sherlock.

“We’re going to be late,” he says to her as he pulls away from her kiss, voice soft in the quiet that has surrounded them.

He tries to feel ashamed of himself at the look that falls over her face.

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Once at school, John can’t help replay the morning’s scene over and over again in his head.

He feels guilty for pushing his wife away like that, yet at the same time he feels decidedly dirty for having kissed her in the first place. The conflicting emotions war inside of him, pulling him in so many different directions that he feels that the only thing that will help settle his turbulent mood is seeing Sherlock again.

Yes, John decides, that’s just what he needs. Even just the thought of seeing Sherlock calms him down significantly. He decides not to dwell on the fact that it has been less than a bloody fucking day since he last saw Sherlock—that doesn’t matter to him at all. Now that he and Sherlock have been together in every sense of the word, John feels more drawn to him than ever. And after what happened this morning, John just needs Sherlock to erase the touch of his wife and make it better.

John leaves the seclusion of his classroom and heads down the corridor towards Mike’s room, knowing that Sherlock has his friend’s class for his next lesson—he had memorised Sherlock’s timetable months ago, after all. He turns the final corner that will lead him to Mike’s classroom and is stopped short by the sound of familiar, bubbling laughter; a sound he has never, not once, heard on school grounds. His gaze falls on his lover and his friend, standing outside of Mike’s door, talking and laughing with each other good-naturedly, Mike’s large hand on Sherlock’s thin shoulder. The look on Sherlock’s face is so care-free, so happy, that John’s breath catches in his throat.

His fists clench so tightly that his fingernails bite into the soft flesh of his palms, stinging sharply. Jealousy shoots through him, irrational, burning, slicing away all sensible thought. He tries to calm himself down, tries to think clearly for a moment, but he can’t. A small, still-coherent part of his brain knows that there is no reason for him to feel this way—not after this weekend, not after everything he and Sherlock did with each other—but that seems to be the very same reason that John’s jaw clenches and his fists tighten.

Because someone else is touching the boy.

Sherlock is his, Goddamn it. He is the only one allowed to touch Sherlock like that, the only one allowed to make Sherlock laugh. Only him.

He knows it is stupid and reckless, but he can’t help it; John marches up to the two of them—talking to each other so casually, so pleasantly—and they both turn at the same time to look at him, smiling still.

“Hello, Mr. Watson,” he hears Sherlock say coyly, just as Mike says, “John, you have to hear what Sherlock did to the Thompson twins—”
But John doesn’t stick around to listen to what Mike is saying. Once he reaches the two of them, he grabs Sherlock roughly by the arm and pulls him away angrily, growling low in his throat as he drags Sherlock down the corridor without a single word of explanation to the student or his friend. At first Sherlock seems shocked by John’s actions, so he lets himself be pulled along. His eyes go wide and his face settles into that blank, expressionless mask that he gets when he is surprised. But as he realises what is happening, John feels Sherlock rouse himself, pulling against the hold that John has on his upper arm.

“John, what are you doing?” Sherlock asks, glancing around the corridor and keeping his voice low. John is glad one of them still has the presence of mind to be careful, because he surely can’t seem to manage it right now.

John doesn’t answer his question, instead gripping Sherlock’s arm tighter and continuing to drag the teen down the corridor and towards his classroom, which is now empty for his free lesson. John pushes Sherlock roughly inside the room, closing and locking the door behind him quickly before turning back to the boy and glaring at him.

“Are you fucking him, too?” John asks Sherlock, moving towards him.

Backing up against a table in the front row of the classroom, Sherlock stares at John with that look once again, that controlled confusion that is slowly cracking around the edges. “What?” Sherlock asks him, as if he is unsure of what to say, unsure of what John is doing.

John pushes him up against the table that Sherlock has backed into, the shoddy wooden legs scraping loudly across the tile. He presses farther into Sherlock’s space, crowding him and looming over him. “You’re mine, Sherlock. Do you understand?” John asks him, gripping the slim teen’s bony shoulders hard, digging his fingers into Sherlock’s skin deep enough to make the boy wince. “All mine. Your arse and your cock and your sharp little mouth. It all belongs to me now,” John tells him, shaking him once just to be sure that Sherlock knows, that he understands.

“John,” Sherlock whimpers and a small, coherent part of John’s brain registers the fact that Sherlock’s voice sounds slightly frightened.

John has to know, though. The thought is burning him up inside, eating away at all of his self-control. “Are you fucking him?” he asks again, voice loud enough to be labelled as a shout, and he shakes the teen again.

“No!” Sherlock yells back, bringing his arms up to try to break John’s hold on him. “Of course not!”

The raging jealousy that has been consuming his brain breaks instantly at Sherlock’s answer, releasing its hold over John and letting the man breathe once again. He pulls Sherlock to him, forcing their mouths together in a harsh press of lips that is in no way pleasurable. It is aggressive and animalistic. He is staking his claim, marking his territory, reminding Sherlock who he belongs to. Against his mouth Sherlock whimpers again, a small sound that drives John wild.

John pushes against Sherlock again, shoving him into the table. Without warning, John’s hands move down to grip Sherlock’s arse and lift him slightly so that he is suddenly sitting on the flat wooden surface of the table top. The height difference forces John to tilt his head up farther in order to continue kissing Sherlock, and he brings his hands around to the grip Sherlock’s thighs. John pushes Sherlock’s legs apart widely so that he can insinuate himself between them, then pulls Sherlock’s hips against his own roughly.

Sherlock gasps into John’s mouth when he feels John’s arousal through layers of clothing. John
takes advantage of the moment to swipe his tongue along Sherlock’s, softening their frantic kiss slightly but making it no less deep. His cock jumps inside his trousers when Sherlock bites down on his bottom lip and sucks at the slick skin softly, rubbing himself against John urgently.

“God, Sherlock. Do you have any idea what you do to me?” he asks, panting into Sherlock’s mouth as he reaches between them and fumbles with the flies of their trousers. He doesn’t know what’s come over him, why he has this urgent need to take Sherlock right here, in his classroom in the middle of the fucking school day. He doesn’t know why he feels the need to do any of the things he does with Sherlock. He doesn’t know at all.

John finally manages to get their trousers open and their pants pushed down just enough to release both of their erections. Sherlock is leaking copiously from his slit and John uses his precome as lubrication, smearing the viscous fluid over the head of Sherlock’s cock and then his own. He runs a finger between the two of them, down the underside of each of their pricks. Sherlock moves to try to touch their cocks as well, but John pushes him away with his free hand, growling at the boy and biting down on Sherlock’s bottom lip harder than Sherlock had done to him earlier. He is in control of this; he will say when and how Sherlock is going to be stroked. He holds all of Sherlock’s self-control and pleasure. No one else.

“Beg me,” he orders, dropping his mouth down to bite sharp kisses into Sherlock’s long neck. “Beg me, Sherlock. Tell me how much you need me to touch you. Tell me how much you want my cock against yours. Tell me how much you love it.”

“Please,” Sherlock pants wantonly, voice a wrecked whisper. John wraps his hand around both of their cocks, pressing them together tightly as he strokes up and down their shafts. Sherlock throws his head back at the sensation and John attacks his Adam’s apple. “Oh fuck, please!” Sherlock cries out into the empty room, no longer able to keep cautious and quiet.

John doesn’t care, either.

“Tell me,” he says again, needing to hear Sherlock say the words.

“I need it, John. I need you,” Sherlock babbles incoherently, head thrown back and eyes shut tight. God, John just absolutely loves seeing him like this, hearing him tell John exactly what he wants to hear. “I love the way your cock feels against mine, I love the way you touch me. Please, don’t stop. Don’t ever stop. I need you to make me come. I want it so bad.”

“Fuck, Sherlock,” John moans, breath coming in short puffs as his hand works over their cocks faster. His head drops down to Sherlock’s shoulder and he presses his face against the boy’s neck, breathing him in. “Fuck.”

“John,” Sherlock gasps, and the man can feel Sherlock’s body go rigid against his own, and he knows that Sherlock is close.

He pumps them together faster.

“J-John!”

Sherlock’s voice is loud in the empty classroom as he comes with a shout, and John hopes like hell that the teacher he shares a wall with isn’t in his room right now. As he feels his own orgasm crashing over him, though, he finds that he can’t really be arsed to care about it too much.

He groans as he releases over his fist, his come mixing with Sherlock’s, sliding warm and wet over his fingers. He loosens his grip slightly but continues to stroke them, drawing out their orgasms.
and searching for Sherlock’s mouth with his own. When he finds it, he presses a searing kiss against it, no less passionate despite his climax.

As he stands there in front of Sherlock, panting and trying to get his breath back after his intense orgasm, John’s brain buzzes. This isn’t the first time that John has felt as if he is taking advantage of Sherlock. This isn’t the first time that he has thought that their relationship is dirty and wrong. It is, however, the first time that he has ever worried that he could hurt the boy, the first time he has ever felt the desire to burn his touch into Sherlock’s body and leave marks for everyone to see, so that they know that Sherlock is his. It is a frightening craving, but one that he cannot shake. So he settles for bending his head down and sucking a love bite into the sensitive, pale flesh of Sherlock’s neck, high enough that he knows Sherlock’s shirt collar won’t be able to cover it.

John doesn’t care anymore; he wants everyone to see it and know that Sherlock is taken.

Sherlock moans under his mouth, his entire body still sensitive after his orgasm. John’s cock pulses out a few more drops of come at the sound, adding to the mess between them.

Slowly, so slowly, John comes back to himself and becomes aware of Sherlock’s body against his own. Sherlock is trembling, both arms pulled back at awkward angles to try to hold himself up against John’s onslaught on the table in the middle of the room. There is nothing that he could have used to lean back against, so his arms hold the majority of his weight. Slight as Sherlock is, John can tell that his arms are about to give out against the force of John pushing against him. Sherlock’s shirt is a complete mess, wrinkled all over and stained down at the bottom where John hadn’t pushed it far enough out of the way. Sherlock’s legs are wrapped tightly around John’s waist, his ankles hooked together behind John’s back, and he doesn’t look like he cares at all about the mess John has made of him. His lips are swollen blood red and shiny with spit, and his fringe is sticking to his forehead where a fine sheen of sweat has appeared, the ends frizzing uncontrollably as the hair dries slowly. Sherlock’s eyes are still glazed over, his chest is rising and falling rapidly, and he doesn’t even seem to notice that come is dribbling down his cock, dripping bit by bit onto the front of his underwear.

John pulls away to look at him and sees a vulnerability and defenselessness and innocence that belong to him. No one else. The trust in it takes John’s breath away and feels vastly more intimate than the orgasm that the two have just shared. He drops his head to work at the love bite again, wanting to be sure it is seared as deeply into Sherlock’s skin as John can make it.

Sherlock whispers as the bruised skin is bitten and sucked at once more.

“Jesus, Sherlock,” John gasps when his mouth finally releases the boy’s flesh. He stares at the mark he has made on Sherlock’s neck, furiously red and shiny with spit. Christ, what was he thinking? What had come over him? “I’m sorry,” he says, pulling away from Sherlock slightly so that John can look him over. “I’m so sorry. I didn’t hurt you, did I?”

Sherlock struggles to sit upright, arms weak from holding himself up against John’s weight for so long. His eyes are shining brightly, though, and there is a look of wonder on his face that John doesn’t like. “If I said that you did, what would you do?”

John’s stomach tightens and he suddenly feels disgusted with himself. “God, I…I’m sorry,” he says, voice cracking. His hands start roving over Sherlock’s body—his arm where John had gripped him too tightly as he dragged Sherlock down the corridor, feeling along his back where John had shoved Sherlock into the desk. “Where? Where did I hurt you?” He looks down and finds thin, angry red scratches on Sherlock’s stomach below his navel, fingernail marks from John impatiently trying to tear open his trousers. The love bite on Sherlock’s neck is large and glaringly bright, the skin around it a sensitive-looking pink which John knows won’t fade any time soon.
“I’m so sorry, love,” he whispers brokenly, face crumpling into sadness. How could he do something like this to the boy? How could he hurt him like this? He bends to kiss the love bite softly, so softly, in apology.

Sherlock’s arms come up to hug him, hold him against Sherlock’s slim body. “John, it’s okay for you to hurt me sometimes when you take me,” Sherlock whispers to him as John buries his face into the crook of Sherlock’s neck once more. “You don’t always have to treat me like I’m about to break. I liked seeing you jealous over me. You’re passionate, alive. And to know that it’s all for me…” he trails off and the wonder is back, but this time in Sherlock’s voice. “No one has ever wanted me like that before.”

John lifts his head at that and looks at Sherlock. He is staring at John, hair in disarray and clothing askew, and the smile on Sherlock’s face is pure happiness, pure belonging. The look on his face tells John that Sherlock feels wanted and desired and worth something to someone.

John did that.

But at what cost? John feels like he is losing more and more of himself day by day, giving it all to Sherlock, letting the boy take it. Since meeting Sherlock, John has done so many things that he would never have done, not in a million years. He doesn’t like it, he wants to stop it, but he doesn’t know how.

“Sherlock, I—” he begins, but Sherlock cuts him off. John is glad because he wasn’t sure what he was even going to say.

“I know that you’re angry. I can see it,” Sherlock tells him, arms still around John’s shoulders but held loosely now, so that they can pull apart from one another and look at each other. “You’re angry at the way that you’ve just let men take your wife, at the way you’ve just sat back and taken the defensive in how you live your life. You’re angry that you had to run away from London because you thought that was the only choice left.”

John doesn’t want to hear this. He breaks Sherlock’s loose grip on him and turns away, tucking himself back into his trousers hastily and doing up his flies as he walks a few steps away. He quickly realises, though, that there is nowhere for him to go in the small classroom, nowhere for him to hide. He hears Sherlock hop off of the table that he had been perched on, hears the wooden legs scrape across the tile floor and the rustle of clothing as Sherlock puts himself away. A moment later, he feels Sherlock’s hand on his shoulder, trying to turn him. John pulls against it, not wanting to look at him, but Sherlock makes him anyway.

“And when you saw me with Stamford, you got scared that it was happening all over again,” Sherlock whispers softly, stepping in close to John, asking silently for a hug. Unable to help himself, John wraps his arms around Sherlock and holds him close, against his heart. “But instead of rolling over, you stood up for yourself. You took back what you thought you were losing.”

“No,” John denies with a shake of his head. This isn’t something that Sherlock should be praising him for. What John has just done, it wasn’t chivalrous. It wasn’t brave or reasonable or right. “It was stupid and immature and insecure of me to do that,” John tells him, and he doesn’t know what to do or say to make Sherlock see how wrong it was. “I could have hurt you. I could have given us away. I was reckless. I don’t know what came over me. If I had hurt you, I’d never be able to forgive myself. I’m sorry.” He presses a kiss to Sherlock’s forehead. “It won’t happen again,” he promises with conviction. He knows that this is one of the reasons why he can’t leave his wife just now, because he doesn’t trust his own self-control. He had thought that Sherlock would be the bigger problem, but this incident just proves how wrong he was.
He tries to pull away, to begin to clean them up so that Sherlock can go back to class, so that they can forget that this ever happened, but Sherlock clings to John. His long pale fingers clench at the front of John’s jumper and force John to look at him.

“But what if I wanted it to happen again?” Sherlock asks, eyes earnest. “What if I wanted to see you like that again, to have you take me like that?”

Christ, what has John done? He has given the child a taste of what it feels like to be wanted desperately, uncontrollably, and of course Sherlock would want it again. Sherlock has never been wanted by anyone before John, ever, and the man can only imagine what it is like to feel that for the first time, after years of being unloved, unnoticed. “No,” John tells him gently, extricating Sherlock’s fingers from his jumper softly, holding the teen’s hands in his own as he talks. “You don’t understand, Sherlock. That’s not how relationships are supposed to be. I don’t want to have to worry about hurting you with something that I’ve said or that I’ve done, especially when we are making love,” he explains patiently, because he knows that Sherlock doesn’t understand; Sherlock doesn’t know what love is supposed to look like. All that he knows is what John has taught him, what John has given him.

Sherlock opens his mouth to say something—to argue with John, the man is certain—because he has that look in his quicksilver eyes. That resilient, reasonable shine that gets John into so much trouble. So John cuts him off before he can bring up something else.

“Come on,” he says, giving Sherlock one more kiss and then dropping his hands so that he can begin to straighten Sherlock’s clothes. “I’ll take you back to Mike’s class. I’ll make up some excuse for why I dragged you away like that.”

John knows that Sherlock doesn’t like it, but he stays thankfully quiet and keeps still as John puts his clothing to rights. He tucks Sherlock’s shirt into his trousers to try to hide the stain at the bottom before doing the flies up gently. Then John closes a button at the top of Sherlock’s dress shirt to try to pull the collar tighter around his neck to hide the love bite. John doesn’t understand why Sherlock leaves his collar so open anyways. Probably to drive John crazy with the desire to run his tongue along the fragile bones of Sherlock’s clavicle every time John sees him.

He shakes himself and finishes sorting Sherlock. John doesn’t know how Sherlock does this to him; how he fills John’s mind with nothing but desire, lust, want, even after he has just had sex with him.

He sighs and moves on to trying to tame Sherlock’s hair, gone frizzy and wild from dried sweat. John runs his fingers through it, hoping to flatten it a bit, but it doesn’t work so he gives it up as a bad job and starts sorting himself out. When he is done and they are presentable once more—Sherlock as much as he can be—John presses a hand to the small of the boy’s back and steers him towards the classroom door. Before John opens it, he turns to Sherlock and smiles at him softly, leaning in for one last, tender kiss.

“I love you,” he whispers against Sherlock’s mouth, wanting to send Sherlock away with something gentle between them, something familiar.

Sherlock kisses him back and smiles, and John hates that he has to open the door but it can’t be helped. The world keeps going, and what he and Sherlock have is something that still has to be hidden because no one else would understand. No one would understand it just like no one understands Sherlock. So John pulls away and lets Sherlock step out into the real world once more, and John follows close behind him because John doesn’t know how to do anything else now. He’ll follow Sherlock anywhere.
They make their way silently down the corridor back towards Mike’s classroom, a respectable
distance between them now. They don’t speak and they don’t look at each other. When John does
dare a glance over at Sherlock, the boy is almost a stranger. He feels utterly useless when he
thinks about the fact that Sherlock can keep their relationship a secret better than he can at the
moment.

When they finally reach Mike’s class, John knocks on the door and the two wait for it to be
opened. It only takes a second before the teacher is answering the classroom door for them,
looking to John for an explanation for what happened earlier.

“Sorry, Mike,” John says, licking his lips and rubbing at the back of his neck. “I, er, had to clear
up something with Sherlock. Thought I caught him cheating on a test.”

He winces at his own stupid choice of words and how metaphorical they are, but it was the first
thing that came to mind and he can’t take it back now. Beside him, Sherlock ducks his head and
John wonders if he is trying to keep from laughing, but he can’t tell—Sherlock moves past him
without a word to either teacher and heads into the classroom.

Mike looks at Sherlock when the boy passes him to get through the door. As he walks by Mike,
John sees Sherlock’s hand come up to rub unconsciously at the bright red love bite John had
sucked into his neck only moments ago. John glances nervously over at his friend, hoping Mike
doesn’t notice the mark that hadn’t been there when Mike had been talking to Sherlock earlier. But
it seems he’s run out of luck. His friend is staring right at the mark on Sherlock’s neck, bright and
tender-looking and obviously new. Mike’s brown eyes are wide behind his glasses and his mouth
is hanging open slightly in shock. He turns back to look at John and the blond fights down the

Mike can’t be certain of anything, John thinks to himself quickly as he fights to keep control of his
rising panic. A mark on Sherlock’s neck that may or may not have been there earlier is not
definitive enough proof to accuse your best mate of misconduct with a student. John knows this,
and uses it to calm his nerves. He successfully fights down his blush and even manages to meet
Mike’s eye as his friend stares at him, looking for something to confirm his suspicions.

John doesn’t give him anything.

“Sorry to disrupt your class. Won’t happen again, mate,” he tells Mike casually, calmly.
Normally. He doesn’t wait around for a reply, and he turns on his heel sharply and walks back
down the corridor to his room, back straight and shoulders squared.

John can feel Mike staring at him from the open door of the classroom until he turns the corner and
he releases a shaky breath.

*

When John gets a bluntly worded text from his friend asking to meet him at the pub that afternoon,
John knows he is in trouble. A part of him wants to tell Mike that he is busy, that he can’t make it.
A part of him wants desperately to run away from this and not have to deal with it.

But he is a soldier, he is honourable. He isn’t going to be scared of this. He won’t run away from
it. He will face it head on because he loves Sherlock, and Sherlock loves him, and he won’t
denounce the boy now. Not ever.

So John walks into their local like he is going into battle, nerves steeled and hands steady. He will
fight for Sherlock; he will defend what is now his. Even if it kills him.
He sees Mike sitting at their usual spot, close to the bartender, and there are already a few pints sitting empty around him. John walks up to him cautiously, unsure if he is headed into enemy territory, if this will be a hostile encounter. He thinks of the term “friendly fire” and how it is a misnomer that still leaves people—comrades, allies—wounded and dying, and he grits his teeth.

John slides into a chair beside his friend and doesn’t order a drink. He waits for Mike to say something because he’s not going to implicate himself right from the start; he knows better than that, at least. So he sits and waits.

And waits.

Just when he can’t take it anymore and is about to say something, Mike speaks, and his voice is broken and full of grief.

“Oh. Please tell me that it’s not true,” he pleads as he turns to look at the blond man, and John can’t remember a time that his friend has looked so devastated. “Tell me that I’m going crazy.”

He waits for John to answer him, for John to deny it, for John to tell him that he’s barmy and then they’ll have a good laugh and everything will be okay, but John doesn’t do any of that. John just stares at him in desperation, like a man drowning and searching for someone to throw him a life preserver.

A look of horror comes over Mike’s face and John can’t help but wince as his friend’s anger explodes, Mike’s fist coming down to bang loudly on the sticky bar top. “The Holmes boy?” he asks, and his voice is loud and harsh. “What the fuck is wrong with you? You realise that you can go to jail for this if anyone were to find out about it? Jesus, John! He’s sixteen fucking years old! He’s just a kid!”

John looks around quickly to see if anyone is listening to them, but at this time of day during the middle of the week there are only lonely old men who are drowning themselves in their drinks. No one is paying attention.

John doesn’t know what to say, so he turns away from his friend. He looks down at the wood grain of the bar top under his hands and shrugs pitifully. “He’s legal,” he mumbles in a sad attempt to defend himself.

Mike doesn’t seem to think that is a valid point. “Barely! And don’t give me that bullshit, because he sure as hell is still your student,” he growls out, lowering his voice now as he, too, looks around the pub. John takes consolation in that; at least Mike isn’t selling him out. Yet. “And can you honestly tell me,” the man continues, breaking through John’s reverie, “that he was he legal when you started it?”

There is only silence in response to Mike’s question as John thinks back to all of the late-night meetings he had with Sherlock before his birthday, and John knows he can’t fool himself.

He feels sick.

The look of horror is back on Mike’s face, made darker by the dim lighting of the dingy pub. “Jesus Christ, John,” Mike breathes out, staring at his friend in wide-eyed astonishment. “Jesus fucking Christ!” He turns back to his drink and downs his pint, half full, in one pull. When he finishes it, he simply stares at into the empty glass, shaking his head. He brings his hands up suddenly to press the heels of his palms into his eyes, lifting his glasses up in the process, and he groans.
John doesn’t know what he is supposed to do, so he does nothing.

“Okay,” Mike says after a minute, and his tone is determined, assured. He turns to John and nods his head in a panicky manner, settling his glasses back down on his face with jerky movements. “It’s going to be okay. You’ll just break it off with him, that’s all. You’ll break it off with him, and if he decides to get stroppy and go to the police, it will just be his word against yours, and everyone at that school knows about that kid’s reputation. You’ll be fine, you’ll be safe,” Mike stresses, and John wonders who he is trying to reassure, himself or John. “You just need to break it off now.”

“No, Mike.”

At that, Mike stops short, shaking his head in confusion and frowning. “What?” He asks it as though John has just spoken an alien language, incomprehensible and unintelligible.

“I’m not going to stop seeing him,” John clarifies, wanting Mike to understand. “I…I can’t.”

“Fucking hell, John!” Mike yells out, and he is so angry and agitated now that he can’t even sit any longer. He jumps out of his chair and it scrapes loudly across the dirty pub floor, drawing the attention of the bartender. “Have you gone round the bend? What is the matter with you?!"

John immediately stands as well, not willing to be on lower ground when Mike is this angry. He knows he needs to calm the other man down; this isn’t a conversation they should be having in public to begin with. The last thing John needs is for Mike to make a scene. He reaches a hand out calmly towards his friend, laying it gently on Mike’s arm and squeezing softly. His other hand is up, palm facing out in supplication, and John looks at him pleadingly, wishing that Mike would calm down long enough for John to explain himself.

The man does, slightly. He is breathing raggedly in his anger and worry, but he stares at John for a short moment longer before he sighs and drops his head, falling back down into his seat. John follows him into his own, and he turns to put a hand on Mike’s knee. He wants Mike to know just how serious he realises this is.

John searches for the words to explain this to Mike, this madness that he still doesn’t fully comprehend himself. He tries to describe it and comes up short because there are simply no words. There is only emotion. Love and fear and anger and joy and adrenaline. The thrill of the unexpected, the alluring edge of danger. It feels the same as it felt before he went on a raid, when his blood pounded through his veins and his heart beat furiously at the excitement of it all, and there was always the thought in the forefront of his mind that this feeling inside him was meant to create a bigger purpose, a better life. It was meant to save people.

So John sets his jaw and pushes Mike’s shoulders around so that he is forcing the man to look him in the eye. When he speaks, there is nothing but conviction and certainty in his voice.

“He makes me feel alive again, Mike. He makes me feel. Full stop. It’s like he reminds me how to breathe. I…I love him.” It is the first time he has said the words to anyone other than Sherlock, the first time he has spoken them out loud in his real life, not the secret one he shares with Sherlock. It is scary and strange and real, but it feels good, so good, to say them and know that they are true.

Mike’s face only crumples more at John’s confession, the deep wrinkles becoming cavernous in his grief. “John,” he says, shaking his head, and he is looking at his friend with dark brown eyes full of pity. “Oh, John. No, you don’t, mate. You just think that you do. He’s confused you, muddled things up. You love Mary,” Mike reiterates, as if John has just simply forgotten and
needs to be told in order to remember. “I know you do. And once you end this you can go back to your life with her, no repercussions.”

John stares at his friend in amazement. “Go back to her?” he repeats, at a loss. “No. I can’t do that. I don’t love Mary anymore. It’s over with her. It’s been over for a long time.”

And there it is. As he speaks the words out loud for the first time, he knows without a single doubt that they are the truth. There is nothing romantic left in his feelings for his wife. There is no more attachment. Even if he didn’t have Sherlock, he knows that he can’t stay married to Mary. He is done.

“So what are you going to do about the Holmes kid, then?” Mike asks, but the question is not meant to start a friendly conversation. It sounds sardonic coming out of Mike’s mouth. “Wait for him to graduate and then move away with him when he goes to university? Follow him around like a middle-aged, besotted, lovesick fool? Don’t you think that might seem a tad suspicious? At the very least Mary will ask questions and dig around, find out that you were having an affair while you were married. It won’t be hard to put two and two together. She’s not an idiot, you know.”

“I…I don’t know what we’ll do,” John says with a shrug, knowing Mike is right. Mary would be vindictive enough to dig into John’s personal affairs during divorce proceedings, and it wouldn’t be hard to prove what John and Sherlock were doing while Sherlock was still his student. “I haven’t really thought about it,” he mumbles lamely.

“It makes sense. John knows that it makes so much sense. But he just can’t imagine living his life
without Sherlock in it. He has seen what type of life burns within him thanks to Sherlock and he won’t give that part of himself up again. He can’t. He will die, he knows. Just fade away into nothingness, like he had been so close to doing before he met Sherlock.

“No, Mike,” he whispers, and he hopes like hell that Mike doesn’t notice the crack in his voice. “I won’t.”

“You’re hurting him, John.”

That brings John up short, just the way Mike knew it would.

Is it true? He had thought it so many times at the beginning of their relationship, but Sherlock had always been so adamant that this was what he wanted. Sherlock had been so eager for it.

“That kid has had a hell of a life,” Mike says to him, his tone still gentle, as if he is explaining something to a child. “I don’t know everything, but I’ve seen his record. I know he doesn’t have anyone in his life, but he needs a friend. Someone who will take care of him and look out for him. You’re taking advantage of him,” Mike repeats, stressing the word, “and he doesn’t even know it. But you do. I know you do.”

John swallows and looks away from his friend. He thinks back on his medical ethics class, on the certification classes he took to be able to teach, on the trainings and lectures they had specifically for this sort of situation.

He is Sherlock’s teacher; he is in a position of power. That part is perfectly clear. Yet even if that weren’t true, there is still the ambiguity of consent. Sexual abuse is made out of the issue of consent, and John thinks about the boy he is in love with. The boy who doesn’t have a mother and doesn’t have a father and doesn’t have any friends or family to teach him how to love or interact with another human being. All Sherlock had before John was a detached human skull that he couldn’t keep track of to save his life.

Sherlock doesn’t have the capacity to consent. John knows this. He doesn’t understand relationships, doesn’t understand what it means to be loved. Sherlock is deficient in that category, even if he will never, ever admit it. So if he doesn’t know or understand what John is doing with him, how can he possibly agree to it?

God, John feels sick. Bile rises up in his throat and he has to fight down stomach acid. How could he have done this? He says that he loves Sherlock, but John has been doing nothing but taking advantage of Sherlock for months. Hurting him, twisting his thoughts, brainwashing him into thinking that Sherlock wants this. Making Sherlock believe that the only way that John would care for him is if he spreads his legs for John, if he lets John take everything from him.

There is a lump rising in his throat, threatening to choke him. When he releases it, it is a breathless sob. John drops his head into his hands and closes his eyes against the shame that he feels.

“God,” he says brokenly, “what have I done?”

Mike doesn’t answer him, just throws an arm around him awkwardly, rubbing his back in a soothing manner.

He lets John’s panic subside before he speaks again. “You have to break it off, John. If anyone finds out, getting sacked will be the least of your problems. You keep this up and you’re going to end up snookered.”

John lifts his head and stares at his friend, torn. He knows he should listen to Mike—of course he
should listen to Mike—but he can’t even entertain the idea of leaving Sherlock.

“You’re going to ruin your life, John,” Mike argues again. “And his. Can you imagine what would happen if you were to get caught? No university would want to touch him; he’d be nothing but a liability to them. Do you want that to happen to him?”

Christ, of course not. John has never thought about that. About how Sherlock would be ostracized even more if they were to get caught together. Mycroft has already done a stand-up job of leaving his younger brother with a shady reputation. It would only get worse if all of those suspicions that the teachers and other students had were actually confirmed.

John could never do that to Sherlock.

No. He won’t let that happen.

Even if he has to break his own heart to stop it.

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End Notes: I can't figure out how to add a hyperlink in the end notes box on this site, so I'll just do it here. Vanimelda4 was nice enough to gift me with some fanart for this fic! You can check it out on Vanimelda4’s Tumblr page here.
As he pulls up to the dark house, John’s stomach roils with the last few pints he had for courage before leaving the pub to talk to Sherlock. The drive is empty, so he knows Sherlock’s father isn’t home. He knocks on the door and Sherlock answers it, looking unsurprised to see John standing on his doorstep after what happened today. John opens his mouth to say something but Sherlock turns sharply on his heel. He heads into the depths of his house and leaves John at the door with a distracted, “Experiment going on in my bedroom, can’t leave it for long,” as he walks away, giving John no choice but to follow him.

So John does, closing the door behind him and walking towards Sherlock’s bedroom at the back of the house like he is walking to his death. He enters the bedroom and sees Sherlock flitting listlessly back and forth, from the microscope at his desk to his bookshelf to some notebooks on his bed. John watches him for a long moment before opening his mouth. He has to fight back nausea as he draws breath to speak.

“Hand me that Erlenmeyer flask over by the window sill, would you?” Sherlock cuts him off, his back to John as he heads over to his microscope again, for all intents and purposes ignoring John. But John knows better.

“Sherlock, this has gone on for too long now.” He means for it to come out strong, certain, confident. Instead it comes out broken, like a plea. “We have to stop this. It’s not fair to you.”

At this, Sherlock turns slowly to look at him, just like John knew he would, weighing his words. “And who, exactly, says that it’s not fair to me?” he asks, voice biting. John can see that he is angry. There is a wild glint in his eyes and his skin looks paler than usual, with two high spots of colour standing out starkly on his cheeks. “Don’t you think that’s something that I should decide? Don’t you think that I would know what’s fair to me? That I would know what’s good and what’s not?”

John swallows thickly, then licks his lips and shakes his head. “No.”

“‘No’?” Sherlock repeats, astounded by John’s gall. He spits out the word as if he hates the taste of it. “Why the fuck not?”

“Because you don’t understand!” John shouts out, finally losing his composure. “You don’t understand what’s happening! You never have!”
It’s rape, plain and simple, even if Sherlock won’t believe it. John is in a position of power over Sherlock. Sherlock doesn’t understand enough about human relationships and emotions to say “no”. Sherlock is desperate for love and care and any kind of connection with another person, and John is taking advantage of that.

But Sherlock doesn’t see it that way, of course. Sherlock has never seen it that way. He has never taken John’s fears and worries seriously. Because Sherlock doesn’t care about any of that. Sherlock doesn’t care about the implications and the consequences and the repercussions. He never has. Sherlock has just taken what he has wanted from John, from the very beginning, heedless of his own safety and well-being. Heedless of John’s sanity.

Sherlock is in no position to know what is best for himself, to know what is right. So it has to be John. It has to be John who does the right thing.

“We have to sto—” he tries to get the words out but they stick in his throat, won’t come out. So he licks his lips and tries again. “We have to—”

This time it is Sherlock who stops him from finishing his sentence. “We don’t ‘have to’ do anything!” he shouts out, throwing his hands up in the air and marching forward towards John, eyes wild and cheeks flushed. “That’s always been your biggest problem; someone says something to you and suddenly you have to do it. It becomes imperative. The good little soldier, always taking orders.” He stops talking and looks at John. He seems to contemplate something for a moment and then decides to say what is on his mind. “You’re a pushover.”

“What?” John asks him, offended. “I’m not a fucking pushover, Sherlock!” It’s not the first time Sherlock has called him that and John is sick of it.

“Yes, you are,” Sherlock reaffirms. “You’re weak, John! That’s why everyone walks all over you! Your bosses back in London did it—that’s why you couldn’t find steady work there. Your colleagues here do it, your wife does it. God, even your wife’s lovers do it! They ring her up and you just give her their numbers! You’re pathetic!” he yells, and the look on his face is so similar to the one that Mary gives him that it makes John’s stomach roil. “No wonder she cheats on you!”

“Shut up, Sherlock,” John says, turning away from the teen because he can’t possibly stand looking at him right now. His breaths are coming in heavy gasps and his heart is racing in his chest. “Just…shut up.”

“Or what? What will you do?” Sherlock asks acerbically, not giving him a moment of peace. “I’ll tell you what you’ll do: nothing. You won’t do a damn thing because that’s what you do every time. You’ll just stand there and take it.” He pauses and for one glorious moment John thinks that Sherlock is done, that he has finally stopped and that John won’t have to listen to him anymore. But then Sherlock opens his mouth again and the next question that comes out of those pretty lips makes John want to throw up.

“What if I were to cheat on you the way that she does?” Sherlock asks. His tone is light, as if he is talking about something no more inconsequential than the weather. “I’ll tell you what you’ll do: nothing. You won’t do a damn thing because that’s what you do every time. You’ll just stand there and take it.” He walks up to John then, coming in close, and John lets him because he is shocked that Sherlock is saying these things to him, speaking this way to him. Sherlock comes in close enough to kiss him, close enough that John can smell him—that warm, spicy scent that is wholly Sherlock, which John loves so much. Sherlock looks him straight in the eye as he whispers, “What if I came over to you afterwards, with the taste of a stranger’s come still in my mouth, and kissed you? Let you smell it on my breath? Let you see what a real man tastes like? Would you just roll over with your tail between your legs, the way you do for her?”
John doesn’t understand what the boy is doing, why Sherlock is goading him like this. Why he is hurting John this way. But he suddenly doesn’t care. Because John’s had enough of it. He’s had enough of people walking all over him and taking from him, telling him what to do.

John grabs Sherlock by the shoulders and digs his fingers into Sherlock’s skin roughly, pushing him back and shoving him harshly against the wall. “No,” he answers Sherlock’s question, bringing his mouth crashing down on the teen’s as he presses Sherlock harder against the wall.

“And why not?” Sherlock asks on a gasp as he struggles against John. The man shoves him back again, jarring him slightly. They fight against each other, hands and fingers and nails scrambling over flesh as John’s teeth trail lower, nipping and bruising and owning.

“Because you’re mine, Goddamn it,” John growls low, bringing his mouth down to Sherlock’s neck and biting at the skin there, tasting his lover and marking Sherlock, going over the bruise he had put there earlier. “I won’t ever let someone else touch you. You belong to me.” With his mouth pressed this close to Sherlock’s body, he can smell the alcohol on his own breath and he cringes when he wonders if Sherlock will think he is drunk. Sherlock makes no mention of it, though, and John forgets about it in the next moment.

“But you’ll let them touch her?” Sherlock’s words turn into a moan as John sucks at the sensitive juncture where his neck meets his shoulder. “Your wife?”

“I don’t give a fuck about her,” John groans, laving the red spot he has made on Sherlock’s pale neck with his tongue, soothing it. His hands come up to work at Sherlock’s buttons, scratching over the boy’s pert nipples in a way that is too hard to be pleasurable. “I could care less who fucks her. But you…God...

John manages to rip Sherlock’s shirt off of him and his fingers trail down to work on Sherlock’s trousers, dipping impatiently into the waistband before they are even undone. He grips Sherlock’s hard cock awkwardly, but that doesn’t stop the brunet’s hips from bucking upwards into John so forcefully that Sherlock’s head jerks backwards and hits the wall with a loud thump that neither of them notice. John tears his lips away from Sherlock’s skin long enough to look at him, and he sees that Sherlock’s mouth is slack and his eyes are glazed over. The two spots of colour on his cheeks from his anger earlier have exploded outwards into a beautiful flush that covers his entire face and creeps down his long, pale neck.

“God, it would kill me if someone else saw you like this,” John groans out. He captures Sherlock’s mouth in a messy, painful kiss as his hands resume their mission to get Sherlock out of his trousers.

“Yes,” Sherlock says as John finally manages to push all of his clothes down and get him naked. He clutches on to John’s shoulders and his mouth seeks John’s out again, desperate. “I want to know that I belong to you, John. Make me see it. Make me feel it.”

And, God, John wants to. John will. John is going to set him alight. He can’t believe he was even thinking about giving this up. He can’t, he would never be able to. It would be physically impossible. He wouldn’t be able to live without this. Because Sherlock is nothing short of a war zone. But that’s all right because John is a soldier made for battle—he couldn’t possibly live his life any other way.

He turns Sherlock harshly around to face the wall suddenly, without warning. John shoves him into the unyielding barrier and puts one hand on the back of Sherlock’s head. He presses the side of Sherlock’s face into the wall, dropping his other hand to wank the teen roughly. Sherlock’s cock is completely hard and practically dripping from the slit and John’s prick gives a sympathetic twitch in his trousers as he rubs himself in between Sherlock’s plush arse cheeks, pressing him
“Do you think you could get this from someone else? Hmm?” John asks him, fingers tightening in inky black hair until Sherlock cries out, wincing in pain as John yanks roughly at the strands. “Do you think someone else could fuck you like this, Sherlock? There is no one—no one—who could fuck you better than I can.” He leans his head down to tear at the back of Sherlock’s neck, wanting to suck another dark, tender love bite into it. He wants Sherlock to be beautifully bright with bruises for days to come, he wants to burn his kisses into Sherlock’s skin. “There is no one who knows how to touch you, how to kiss you, how to make you fall apart. How to put you back together. Do you understand? No one.” He rubs his fingers through the slick fluid that is dripping out of the tip of Sherlock’s cock, and the boy whimpers and moans into the wall that his face is pressed up against.

“Say it,” John tells him, giving his cock a long, slow pull. “Tell me you understand. Tell me there’s no one else.”

“I—I understand.” Sherlock bites out, wincing as John tightens his fingers in Sherlock’s hair once again, loving the way Sherlock inhales sharply with the pain of it. “T-there’s—ah! There’s no one else! I swear to God, there could never be anyone else!”

“Christ, the things you do to me,” John growls out as he grinds his hips against Sherlock’s naked arse, letting his stiff prick rut between Sherlock’s plump arse cheeks through the barrier of his trousers. His breath is coming in heaving gasps already and he can barely wrap his mind around the words he wants to say, he’s so turned on. “How do you do this? How do you make me feel this way?”

John doesn’t understand it; he doesn’t understand how they go from arguing with each other, almost ending things, tearing each other’s throats out…to this. His cock presses between the plump flesh of Sherlock’s arse, still trapped behind a layer of clothing, and they both gasp, mindless with want.

The things they do to each other, the way they feel…the heat of this flame…

*It’s madness, John thinks. It must be.*

“I don’t do anything, John,” Sherlock whimpers out, his cheek pressed flush against the wall. “It’s you. You want to dominate someone completely. You’ve been walked all over by everyone your entire life so you want someone who will submit to you entirely. You crave it but it scares you, so you push it away. You hide it. And you keep letting people walk all over you because you think that will make it go away. Especially me. That’s why you give in to me all of the time. Because the feeling is particularly strong with me.” Sherlock pushes back against John’s hips, grinding his arse into John’s cock. The action makes the man dizzy with arousal, so out of his mind with desire that he can almost forget what Sherlock is saying. Almost. “You want to own me completely, all of the time,” Sherlock continues, making desperate little movements with his pelvis, “but you know that you shouldn’t, so you constantly give in to me, to try to offset the guilt that you feel for having those thoughts.”

John stares at him, at a loss but frantically trying not to show it. He can’t even deny Sherlock’s words because he knows that it would be pointless to try. He’s always been aware of his tendency to want to control his partners, especially in the bedroom; that dark fissure that runs through him which wants to dominate someone, own them, hurt them. He’s been aware of it, and he’s been sure to channel it properly, make sure it never gets out. Instead of hurting, he learned to heal. In place of fighting, he became a soldier. Even with Sherlock it is like this—John wanted to possess him, so he accomplished that by taking care of him.
“You love this, John,” Sherlock’s voice breaks through his thoughts, deep and dark and filled with desire. It sets John’s skin tingling and his heart pumping, the thought that he can do anything to Sherlock and the boy will let him. “You love doing this to me. You love having me like this.” Sherlock looks over his shoulder at John, quicksilver eyes glinting dangerously in the dim light of his bedroom. The edges of his deadly little mouth are sharp and sweet. “You love having me at all, any way you can, and that’s why you’ll never, ever be able to leave me. Even if you wanted to. You should know better than to try by now.”

He doesn’t want to hear what Sherlock is saying. He doesn’t want to hear these things about himself; these secret, awful things that he knows deep down are true. So John decides that he’ll just have to make Sherlock stop talking.

“Shut up and get on your fucking knees.”

Sherlock drops to kneel before him willingly enough—without a second thought, without any argument. He even raises shaking hands to help John open his trousers because the man’s fingers don’t seem to want to work right either. Between the two of them, they manage to get John’s button undone and the zipper pulled down. John doesn’t take his trousers off, though. He wants to stay dressed while Sherlock kneels before him completely naked, so he just pushes down the waistband of his pants and pulls his hard, engorged cock out of his clothes, holding it silently out for Sherlock.

On his knees, Sherlock is perfectly eye level with John’s groin. The boy licks his lips to wet them in preparation for the slide of skin on skin, but John wants him to realise that this isn’t supposed to be something that Sherlock is meant to enjoy. This is meant to remind Sherlock who he belongs to, to show him that there is no one else who can make him feel the way that John makes him feel, do the things to him that John does. The thought alone is enough to make John feel desperate and dangerous and more turned on than he thinks he’s ever been.

When John grabs him roughly by the hair and yanks him forward, surprise is the simplest word to describe the look on Sherlock’s face. He opens his mouth in a pained gasp and—ever the opportunist—John directs Sherlock’s mouth right onto his cock. He pushes in too deep, too fast; pressing to the back of Sherlock’s throat right off the bat and making him gag around John as his hands come up to John’s thighs, gripping tightly.

John pulls back slightly, giving Sherlock space to breathe, but keeps his cockhead in Sherlock’s mouth. Sherlock draws in a breath and tries to pull back, but John has both hands in his hair and he doesn’t let Sherlock move too far away. He looks down the length of his body and sees Sherlock staring up at him, eyes wide and almost child-like in their shock. John waits for one second, silently asking, making sure that Sherlock is okay with this because he would never, ever, no matter how mad he is at the boy—

Before he even finishes his thought he feels Sherlock’s tongue come up to lick along his shaft; soft, short playful licks that end with him sucking at the head. John groans once, loudly, before slamming his cock back into the heat of Sherlock’s mouth completely, letting his lips slide all the way down John’s shaft. He feels Sherlock’s nose bump against the base of his pubic bone and he tightens his fingers in Sherlock’s hair.

Sherlock takes him wonderfully, just like John has taught him after all this time. The teen’s hands tighten on his thighs and John can feel Sherlock’s breath come out in a large strangled huff through his nose against the soft, curly hair at the base of his shaft. He presses Sherlock’s face deeper into his groin and he knows that he can’t hold Sherlock on him for much longer, but he savours the sweet heat of it for just a second more. Sherlock swallows around him, trying to cough, and John
pulls him back in a rush, looking down at him as Sherlock gags and gasps for breath.

He’s made a mess out of Sherlock already. His glass-green eyes have watered from the pressure John is exerting on him and reflexive tears are streaming down his face, tracking his cheeks and meeting with the spit that is running down his chin. Sherlock’s cheeks are a deep, blotchy red from the lack of air and his hands are shaking as they rest on John’s thighs, the fingers clenching sporadically. In between his legs, Sherlock’s prick is still hard, the slender length of it jutting out. John can see that Sherlock has dripped a small puddle of precome onto the carpet beneath his knees. John’s cock twitches at the sight below him, and he grabs hold of his prick to rub the head softly along the closed seam of Sherlock’s mouth.

“Get up,” he tells Sherlock hoarsely, pulling him roughly to his feet by a thin, fragile-feeling arm. “I want your arse.”

John turns them around and shoves Sherlock towards his bed. When they reach it, he pushes Sherlock face down onto the mattress before he can voice his opinion on the matter, pressing into Sherlock’s back so that he can’t try to turn over. Sherlock struggles slightly, mostly for show John thinks, for the thrill of it. The fight leaves him fast when John manages to pin him down with one forearm pressed across the length of Sherlock’s shoulder blades and the other hand rubbing at the hole of his upturned arse.

He takes a moment to savour the sight of Sherlock like this, arse up and panting heavily for him. With his free hand, he spreads Sherlock’s plump arse cheeks as well as he can while pressing Sherlock harder into his mattress, exposing the tight little pink pucker of his hole. He bends forward to kiss the dimples on each side of Sherlock’s spine before pressing Sherlock harder into his mattress, exposing the tight little pink pucker of his hole. He bends forward to kiss the dimples on each side of Sherlock’s spine before letting his lips trail to the middle of Sherlock’s sacrum, right above the dip of his arse. He lets spit pool in his mouth before releasing it in a gentle trickle, watching it slide down the valley of Sherlock’s arse, catching in the divot of his entrance. He lets spit pool in his mouth before releasing it in a gentle trickle, watching it slide down the valley of Sherlock’s arse, catching in the divot of his entrance. He lets spit pool in his mouth before releasing it in a gentle trickle, watching it slide down the valley of Sherlock’s arse, catching in the divot of his entrance. He brings his finger round to rub at Sherlock’s hole, massaging the saliva in. John won’t take him dry, he knows this, but he wants to let Sherlock feel him, wants to let Sherlock know that John can give him pain and pleasure, and it is completely John’s decision which he gets to have when John fucks him. So he slips the tip of his index finger inside of Sherlock with only his spit to ease the way, and Sherlock bucks and groans beneath him.

“Ah! J-John!”

He stretches him with only the tip of one spit-slicked finger for a long time, until the muscle is softened and relaxed and Sherlock is a panting, writhing mess beneath him, pliant and controllable. When John removes the arm that has been pining Sherlock to the bed and the boy doesn’t try to get up, he reaches over to rummage in the bedside table for Sherlock’s bottle of lube. He finds it and slicks his other fingers up before adding a second to Sherlock’s hole, letting his other hand wander towards Sherlock’s hard, hanging cock. His own prick throbs painfully where it hangs out of his trousers as he presses into Sherlock’s prostate and feels an upwelling of fluid leak out of the tip of Sherlock’s cock. The knowledge of how wet Sherlock gets never fails to push John over the edge, and he doesn’t know how much longer he can wait before he fucks Sherlock into the mattress. He doesn’t even bother wasting time on undressing any further, and the sight of Sherlock’s pale, naked body next to his own clothed one does funny things to a primal part of John’s brain. He knows he’ll have to take the boy soon.

John presses a third finger in and stretches Sherlock as quickly as he can. He fumbles with the tube of lubricant a bit before he is able to spread a generous amount on everything he can touch, wetting his own cock liberally and hoping that will make up for his haste.

When John finally pushes his cock into Sherlock, the tight heat of him is incredible,
overwhelming. Sherlock clenches around him and curses and grits his teeth, fingers gripping the bed sheets and knuckles turning white. Sherlock feels like he is on fire inside, burning hotter than hell.

“Fuck,” John pants as he watches tiny beads of water splash onto the pale, flat, freckled expanse of Sherlock’s back. It takes him a moment to realise that it is sweat, rolling off of his own forehead. “Fuck,” he says again as he pulls out slightly and pushes back in. John can’t believe how tight the boy is, even after three fingers of preparation and handfuls of lube. It shouldn’t be possible; nothing should feel this good.

John pulls out with a low growl and flips Sherlock over, onto his back with his knees drawn up to his chest. He pushes in again, deeper this time, harder. He groans at the feel of it, the all-consuming pleasure. Beneath him Sherlock’s hips finally move to meet his thrusts, pressing back against him and making everything go hazy around the edges. He fucks into Sherlock faster, hips speeding up as Sherlock makes beautiful, encouraging noises beneath him.

John is addicted, he knows. Completely. Utterly. He needs Sherlock. He needs everything that Sherlock gives him, everything that Sherlock is. He will die without it. He needs more, always more. He needs to touch all over, he needs to kiss everywhere, he needs to taste everything, he needs to be deeper, deeper, deeper.

God, what is this boy doing to him? He isn’t himself when he is around Sherlock. John has never been a possessive man, but as he pounds into Sherlock’s slim body harshly, the compelling urge to own roils deep in his belly. It spreads outwards and heats his flesh from the inside out, the need for Sherlock an all-consuming fire burning out of control within him.

“Yes,” Sherlock encourages, startling John for a moment, making the man think that maybe he had spoken some of his desires out loud. He doesn’t think that is the case, though. Sherlock is simply babbling incoherently, fucking back into him as John pushes up to meet him. “Yes, come on, John. Give it to me. I want it all.”

Yes, and that was the crux of it; Sherlock wants it all. Sherlock always wants it all. And John always gives it to him. He can feel Sherlock taking from him like he always does. Leaching everything from him that makes John who he is. Draining it all away, holding it hostage, and John doesn’t know if he ever wants it back, ever wants back who he was. Not if he can be someone new, someone better, happier, with Sherlock.

He slows his thrusts by increments, so gradually that Sherlock barely even notices until John is suddenly barely even moving. The man slides out of Sherlock’s reddened hole languidly, at a maddeningly unhurried pace that has Sherlock squirming against him, trying to thrust his hips against John’s and looking up at the man with a withering glare.

“What are you doing?” Sherlock asks, still out of breath from the frantic fucking John was giving him only moments before. “Why have you stopped?”

“I haven’t stopped,” John replies, taking a long pull and letting the head of his cock barely slip past the rim of Sherlock’s hole, popping free of the boy’s body. Sherlock whimpers at the loss before John is pushing back in with deliberate slowness, revelling in the feel of Sherlock opening up and closing around him.

“Please, fuck me,” Sherlock begs him, turning his face and rubbing it into the pillows as he squirms underneath John, voice wrecked. “Fuck me hard. Harder, God, John, please!”

“No,” John says harshly as he slides into him slowly. He grips Sherlock’s arms tightly along his
sides and squeezes, making sure that Sherlock is paying attention to what he is saying. “You don’t
get to decide how I fuck you. You don’t get to tell me how to do it. You’ll lie there and take what
I give you. And you’ll love it.”

John knows that Sherlock thinks that he wants it fast and rough, wants to be shoved around and
held down and used up. He knows that Sherlock got a taste of it and was intrigued by it—but John
knows Sherlock better than that. He knows that Sherlock loves it when John whispers loving
words to him softly while they have sex. Sherlock loves it when John tells him that he is amazing
and wonderful and gorgeous. He loves it when John holds him like he is fragile, touches him like
he is precious, looks at him like he is something special. Because Sherlock is. He is all of those
things and so much more. And John loves letting him know that just as much as Sherlock loves
hearing it. Because the praise just seems to turn Sherlock on even more. Sherlock loves being
brilliant and gorgeous and good at things. He loves hearing how amazing he is.

And so John doesn’t mind telling him. Doesn’t mind it at all. He’ll show Sherlock that being
owned and had by John is so much better than being used by him.

“God, look at how well you take my cock,” John tells him as he pulls out of Sherlock completely.
He watches as Sherlock’s hole flutters around the emptiness John has left, looking for something to
fill it. “Like you were made for it, Sherlock. Beautiful. You’re absolutely beautiful, baby. Your
arse, Jesus,” he groans as he pushes back in unhurriedly, and Sherlock whimpers beneath him,
fingers tangling in the sheets. “I could fuck it all day. It’s perfect. So tight. I can’t decide if I love
fucking your arse or your mouth more,” he says. He leans forward to bring his fingers up to that
mouth, and Sherlock opens his lips obligingly, looking almost strung out as John pushes into him
leisurely, sucking on the man’s fingers. “I want to do both one day, right in a row—fuck your arse
and plug you up and then make you suck me. I’ll come in your mouth so that you’ll just be full of
me. You’re so good at taking my come, I know you’d just love it. My perfect little come-whore.”

“John,” Sherlock pants, releasing the man’s fingers, “please—harder, fuck!!!”

Suddenly the boy is at the very brink of climax—John can feel it, he knows the signs so well. As
soon as Sherlock’s body tightens, John’s hips snap forward roughly, finally—finally—giving in to
Sherlock’s demands of harder, faster, rougher. John pounds into him as brutally as he can, making
Sherlock wail loudly. He fucks the orgasm out of Sherlock; the teen’s cock spurts short streams of
come with each of John’s relentless thrusts as Sherlock’s body goes limp underneath the man,
convulsing slightly as tiny little aftershocks run through him.

Sherlock is pliant as John continues to use his body to chase his own orgasm. He can feel it
building, burning deep, the pleasure growing low in his belly like the sun rising up and warming
everything, setting it on fire. He looks down the length of Sherlock’s body to see that his come has
gotten everywhere. It is on Sherlock’s groin and his stomach and his chest and a single speck of it
has even reached as high as Sherlock’s shoulder. John drops his head down to lick it all up as well
as he can while he continues his deep, harsh thrusts into Sherlock because he just has to taste to the
boy, he simply has to.

“So good, so gorgeous. Fucking amazing, baby. You’re mine. Every bit of you is mine. Say it.
Say you’re mine, I want to hear it.”

“Yours,” Sherlock slurs, blissed out of his mind and half incoherent. “M’yours. Always.”

At Sherlock’s soft words John’s orgasm uncoils, burning through his body and sparking outwards
in a rush. John comes, his hips stuttering and his thrusts turning shallow as his body gives out with
the force of his climax.
“You’re going to be the death of me,” John says breathlessly as he bites down on Sherlock’s shoulder. Sherlock groans beneath him at the sharp pinch of it but is too tired to do anything about it. “You suffocate me, drown me, set me on fire. I’ve never felt more alive. God, I love you. You’re going to be the death of me and I’m going to let you.”

John drops his sweaty head onto Sherlock’s shoulder, rolling his forehead across Sherlock’s equally sweaty skin. His mind is reeling from the force of his orgasm and his breath doesn’t seem to be showing any signs of slowing. His cock finally softens enough to pop out of Sherlock’s hole uncomfortably, and John takes the opportunity to throw himself down onto the bed beside Sherlock, rolling onto his back and staring up at the ceiling. They lie there, Sherlock in his mess and John with his thoughts, not speaking.

“Mike knows,” John says suddenly into the post-coital silence of the room. The subject may not be the best pillow-talk, but it is something that they will need to deal with, and very soon.

Sherlock makes a noise in the back of his throat but doesn’t look over at John. He just continues to stare up at the ceiling of his bedroom. “I assumed as much when you cancelled on me after school and then showed up at my door looking like someone had killed your cat.”

“Don’t make jokes, Sherlock. Funny doesn’t suit you,” John says bitingly, rolling over and sitting up on the edge of the bed, looking for something to wipe his softening cock off with. He finds a t-shirt of Sherlock’s on the floor and bends to pick it up. Once he is as clean as he can make himself, John tucks his prick away and does up his trousers, trying to make himself somewhat presentable.

“What do you want me to do, then?” Sherlock asks from behind him, and his voice has gone soft and quiet, serious. “Just let you walk away from me?”

John sighs, running a hand through his short blond hair and turning back to look at him. Sherlock is sitting up in bed, naked and sticky and dishevelled. His hair is a mess and there are love bites all over his neck, along with dried tear tracks on his face and crusting semen on his stomach. John doesn’t think he’s ever loved him more.

“We shouldn’t be doing this,” John tells him, meaning it. Meaning it more than he’s ever meant anything in his life. “I know we shouldn’t be doing this and yet…I can’t.” He shakes his head, looking Sherlock straight in the eye. “I never could. Even from the beginning, I could never stop myself from being with you.”

He can see Sherlock visibly relax at his words, knowing that John isn’t going to leave him after all, knowing that John isn’t going to try to walk away again. Sherlock looks at him tentatively, makes a jerky, abortive movement towards John, decides against it, then tries again. He wipes off his stomach with a corner of his duvet, then crawls across the bed to the man and comes up behind him while John sits on the edge. His arms wrap around John’s midsection and he presses his chest to John’s back, dropping his head to rest on John’s shoulder.

He sighs and turns to press a kiss to the crown of Sherlock’s head. John’s arms come up to twine around Sherlock’s, interlocking their fingers together. “We’re going to get caught by someone who won’t care whether or not we get hurt,” he tells Sherlock softly. “By my wife, or your father, or someone else. I know it and I still can’t let you go. Because you’re the brightest thing that’s ever been in my life, Sherlock,” he tells the top of the curly head, whispers it into unruly tangles, arms gripping Sherlock tightly where they are wrapped around him. “You’re just this blazing fire shooting sparks out at the world, burning fiercely, holding back all of the dark in your life and mine by sheer will. And I’m half afraid that if I reach out and touch you, I’ll get burned because I feel like I’m not supposed to feel that fire. I’m not supposed to want it. But I do want it, Sherlock. I
want it like I’ve never wanted anything before in my life. Ever. I want it all. I want the heat, and
the light, and I want the burn. And, you know what?” he asks, disentangling himself from the
boy. He pulls them away from each other so that they can look at one another, so that he can look
into Sherlock’s face as he tells him, “A part of me feels like we deserve this; like we deserve each
other. Like we deserve to be happy, finally, after years of being miserable. We’ve come this far,
and we’ve both found out what we’re made of. We have the scars to prove it. So why should we
give it up?” he asks, begs Sherlock for an answer.

Sherlock simply shakes his head, taking John’s face gently in his hands and placing a chaste kiss
on his lips. “We don’t have to, John,” he says quietly.

“We don’t?” John presses, looking in Sherlock’s face, searching for answers that he wants
desperately.

Sherlock gives him a small smile and shakes his head once again before placing a placating kiss on
his forehead, like John has done to him so many times before in the past. Then the teen gets up to
don a dressing gown on his way to his desk to check the experiment that John had interrupted when
he had shown up at Sherlock’s doorstep.

John stays on the bed and stares across the room at the teenager before him, this boy that he is
risking everything for, that he can’t pull himself away from, even when he knows it is the best
thing for him. The blue silk material of his dressing gown flows around Sherlock’s body like a
shimmering sheet of water, almost ethereal against the pale thinness of Sherlock’s frame. John
feels his love for Sherlock flare up inside of him, burning brightly.

“It was never like this with Mary, you know,” he feels the need to tell Sherlock from his spot
across the room, voice pitched so that Sherlock can hear him. “I never felt this…crazy over her.
Yeah, I loved her, and yeah, I wanted to be with her. But that was it.” He shakes his head, at a loss
for words. “It was just…normal. What people who have never fallen in love think love should
be. I laughed with her and I fought with her; she has always had this way of making me angry. But
when I’m angry at her, that’s it. I’m just angry. I don’t think about how much I love her, or how
beautiful she looks when her cheeks are flushed red as she’s yelling at me. But with you…” John
shakes his head, trying to find the words. “Even when I’m angry at you—which is quite a lot, I’ll
have you know—there’s still this part of me that wants you so badly. I want you all the time, no
matter what we’re doing. Even when you’re throwing yeast on me like a loon, or pushing me out
of your house, or deducing my sexual fetishes out loud, or telling me all of my biggest faults,” he
says with an exasperated chuckle. “There’s never a moment when I’m not crazy about you, when I
don’t just want to take you in my arms and kiss you until neither one of us even knows what we are
doing any longer. I’ve loved people before, but it’s never burned me alive like this does. So,”
John pauses, stops to double-guess what he is about to say, wondering if it is the right time, but
then he nods his head and continues. “Yeah. I may have thought before that I was in love with
Mary…but now that I’ve seen how I feel about you, I can’t believe that I ever thought that what I
felt for Mary was enough. It wasn’t.” He shakes his head again, looking over at Sherlock. “It
wasn’t nearly. But you are. You’re enough. So yeah, if you asked me to, I would.”

“Hmm?” Sherlock says distractedly, face glued to the eyepiece of his microscope, pretending not
to listen, but John knows better. “If I asked you to what?” he asks, as if he doesn’t know any
better.

“Leave her,” John answers him, like he is stating the obvious. He runs his palms up and down his
thighs anxiously, nervous to finally be talking about this, to actually be voicing the decision he
made what seems like forever ago. “If you asked me to do it, to be with you, I would. In a
heartbeat.”
At that Sherlock glances up at him for a moment and then smiles slowly, widely, but doesn’t say anything in response.

“So…” John says nervously. “Er, are you going to ask me to?”

“No, John,” Sherlock says, his smile morphing into a smirk as he turns away from the man and goes back to his experiment. “Not right now.”

John releases a breath he didn’t know that he had been holding, but something in his chest loosens anyways, even if Sherlock’s answer wasn’t the one he had been expecting. It is almost anticlimactic, to be worrying over something for so long only to have it end up this way. He shakes his head and gets up to make sure his clothes are decent, double checking that he’s done up his trousers and glancing over at Sherlock to find a grin on his face, surprised to find a matching one on his own.

As he stands there, he marvels at how the situation has played out. He had come over to Sherlock’s house with the goal of breaking things off with him, of breaking both of their hearts with the best of intentions even though it would have hurt both of them immeasurably. Instead, he seems to have only succeeded in cementing his connection to Sherlock further; telling Sherlock that it is almost impossible for John to leave him and even going so far as to practically offer up a divorce from his wife right at that moment for the teenage genius.

His heart thuds in his chest as he realises how far gone he is.

He finishes getting sorted and looks over to Sherlock. The teen is sitting at his desk after rolling out of bed right after a good shag, hair still a mess, naked under his dressing gown. He barely even bothered to wipe himself off. As John stares at him, though, the man can’t help thinking that Sherlock looks beautiful in his unruliness, his unmanageability. A whirlwind of life and love and laughter and unpredictability and a million other things that John doesn’t even have names for.

John can’t believe he had almost given this up.

He slowly walks over to Sherlock where he sits at his desk and takes the teen into his arms even slower, almost afraid that Sherlock will slip away from him. Afraid that he is so undeserving of the brunet that Sherlock will simply dissipate in his grasp, untouchable, unattainable by someone like John. But he pulls Sherlock close to him and the boy is still there, face pressed against John’s belly, real and solid and warm. Relief floods through John at the fact that he can still hold Sherlock this way, kiss him if he wants to. And he does want to. He bends down and brings his lips close to Sherlock’s, barely touching. “Don’t let me let you go, Sherlock,” he whispers against Sherlock’s mouth. “I’m an idiot and I won’t ever know better. But you do. So help me. Don’t ever let me let you go.”

He feels Sherlock smile gently against his lips. “Don’t worry, John. I won’t.”

Sherlock kisses him then, and in that instant the flame inside of John that he constantly feels for the boy burns hotter than before, searing everything else away.

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End Notes: I have written a spin off series set in the same AU as The Burning Life, in which John and Sherlock explore the growing daddy kink aspect of their relationship more fully. I have several stories already written for this series, and they all involve daddy kink. I know a lot of people aren’t
interested in that sort of thing, so that is why I decided to keep it separate from this story. This way, it gives readers the option of reading about that particular kink or not. The Burning Life will still only have a slight hint of this kink, really no more than you have already seen, and will not be affected by the spin off series at all. So if you decide not to read the spin off, it won’t do a thing to TBL’s plotline. I will be posting the first of these spin offs after chapter 26 or 27 of The Burning Life. I will try to make TBL part of the series that I put the spin offs in, so I don’t know if subscribers will get emails notifying you when I post a spin off. I’m not sure how the subscription thing is set up to work. If you are interested in reading about the daddy kink part of John and Sherlock’s relationship, I would recommend you read the spin offs (shameless self-plug). I think I have written them in a way that delves into the psychology of that particular kink, and isn’t just shameless, dirty smut (though there is plenty of that, too!)
John manages to dodge Mike for the next few days at school, so he doesn’t feel too poorly about the fact that he hadn’t broken up with Sherlock like he had meant to do after speaking to his friend the other night.

He isn’t so lucky about dodging time spent with Mary.

“I just don’t understand why I have to come along,” John says for the tenth time while Mary just rolls her eyes, breathing out heavily through her nose. She does that when she is trying not to yell.

“Because it’s our house and I thought it might be fun to pick out the paint samples together,” she says slowly, as if she is speaking to a child. “Besides, I figured that it would just be nice to spend some time together. I didn’t think it mattered what we were doing.”

John shuts up after that, feeling like a tit for complaining about spending the evening with his wife instead of shagging his teenage lover. They haven’t rowed in quite some time, and John really doesn’t want to be the one who breaks that spell, but he thinks that picking out paint samples together may just be asking for trouble. He bites his tongue, though, and lets Mary drag him along. It turns out that he is pleasantly surprised by how well they get on over the whole thing. They aren’t exactly blissfully happy to be out doing this with each other but they aren’t having a domestic in the middle of the department store, either, so that is a step forward, John thinks.

They manage to come to a decision on a colour scheme after a surprisingly short amount of time and are talking about going to a restaurant for dinner when Mary bumps into a woman who she works with in the queue as they are about to leave. After some quick introductions are made, John finds that the woman is actually Dr. Patel, Mary’s supervisor at the clinic where she works. They stand and chat for a bit before inviting Dr. Patel—Annie, she insists on being called—to have dinner with them.

The three of them are out of the department store and walking down the pavement towards a great little Chinese place when John’s mobile goes off.

‘Received: Need you. SH’ is all that it says.

Sent: Can’t right now. With Mary.

‘Received: Need you. SH’ is all that is sent back again.
**Sent: What is it? Are you ok? Not hurt, are you?**

He waits for a reply but nothing comes in.

Mary and Annie are walking ahead of him, chatting happily with one another. They continue walking for several more blocks.

Still no reply.

**Sent: Sherlock? Please, just tell me if you're ok**

By the time they reach the restaurant, fifteen minutes have passed with no response from Sherlock and a cold knot of dread is growing in John’s stomach. Mary is about to open the door for them to go inside when he holds out a hand to stop her.

“Mary, I’m sorry, I have to go.”

She stares at him blankly for a moment, completely surprised and at a loss. “What?” she says with a forced laugh. Her eyes shoot over to Annie, who is standing next to her and looking uncomfortable now, before glancing back at John. “What do you mean you have to go? We’re about to have dinner together.”

“I know, but Mike just texted and I think something’s wrong. I think he needs my help.” John licks his lips and tries not to feel badly about the lie. He knows he had told his friend that he wouldn’t use him as an excuse to go meet up with Sherlock anymore, but this can’t be helped. Actually, Mike would probably be even less inclined to be okay with the notion now that he knows that John’s affair is with a student who is barely over the legal age of consent. John doesn’t dwell on that, though. He really just wants to get away from Mary as quickly as possible and find Sherlock. “I’m sorry, Mary, really, I am.” He turns to Annie and smiles at her apologetically, mumbling a quick “sorry” to her as well while he digs his key out of his pocket. “Here, take the car, I’ll catch a cab.”

He holds the key out to her and uses her still-fresh astonishment at his audacity to his advantage. He presses the key into her hand and then turns around and heads for the kerb, raising his hand to hail a cab. One pulls up just as she rouses herself.

“John!” she calls out, taking a step forward.

John knows that if he stops she will do nothing but ask questions. He doesn’t have any answers for her—well, none that she will like, anyways—so he just simply says again, “Sorry. I’ll be home later tonight. Don’t wait up.” Then he gets into the cab and gives the driver Sherlock’s address once the door is closed, not looking at his wife as he pulls away from the kerb.

*

When the cab pulls up to Sherlock’s house, John is relieved to see the driveway empty, as usual. At least it means that Sherlock’s father didn’t come home in a drunken rage. Still, that kid could get up to any number of nefarious things, John knows this from experience. It wouldn’t do to think Sherlock was all right just yet. John has to see him with his own two eyes before he knows Sherlock is safe and healthy.

He knocks on the door but no one answers. He tries not to panic until the third set of knocks, when he is all but banging on the door and still Sherlock is not answering. Finally he simply tries the doorknob and finds it open, so he walks in. It makes him think of that time not too long ago when he had crept up on Sherlock after a days-long insomnia binge, looking so out of his mind with
sleep deprivation that he seemed strung out on drugs.

John makes his way carefully through Sherlock’s house, to the back towards Sherlock’s bedroom. He opens the door slowly, looking around him and missing the teen for the longest time because Sherlock is actually lying completely still on his bed, not moving at all. When John sees him, he pushes the door open the rest of the way and walks in.

“Sherlock, are you all right?” is the first thing John asks, looking him over as John hovers above him.

Sherlock’s eyes are closed as he lies prostrate on his bed, his hands held up in front of his lips and pressed together at the palms. His skin is a healthy colour and his breathing seems regular, but without checking his pulse or looking in his eyes, John can’t be completely sure that he is okay.

“Sherlock,” John says again, reaching a hand out to shake him.

Sherlock startles suddenly, making John jump slightly.

“Jesus, were you asleep?” John asks, drawing a shaky breath.

“What?” Sherlock frowns, sitting up in his bed and turning to place his bare, boney feet on the ground. “No. Why would you think that?”

John stares at him. “Then why didn’t you answer me?” he practically shouts, gesticulating wildly with his hands in his anger.

“What are you talking about?” Sherlock asks, looking as if he is growing bored with John’s silly little game.

“My texts,” John stresses, pointing to Sherlock’s mobile, which is sitting on the bedside table, right by the head of his bed. “I was asking if you were okay. I was worried,” he bites out, trying hard not to snap.

“Oh,” Sherlock says dismissively. He waves a hand nonchalantly and then gets up and flounces to his desk, blue dressing gown fluttering behind him. “Boring.”

John stares at him for a moment, not believing the gall of the boy, the sheer audacity. “Sherlock, I was about to have dinner with Mary,” he says, trying to get the teen to understand. “I left her at the bloody restaurant!”

Sherlock sits at his desk behind his microscope, looking up at him in confusion. “Why did you do that?”

“Because you texted me, you pillock!” he bursts out, no longer able to keep the anger and frustration inside.

“Oh, yes, I did, didn’t I?” Sherlock replies distractedly, his attention going back to his microscope and whatever he has underneath the lens. “I needed something.”

John draws a deep, calming breath, trying to bring his blood pressure down. It doesn’t help. “What did you need, then? Hmm? Nicotine patches? Tea? What?”

“I bought some fruit for an experiment that I want to do, and I needed you to help me with it,” Sherlock says with a dismissive wave of his hand towards a crate at his feet under the desk, not taking his eyes from the piece of scientific equipment they are currently glued to.
“You can’t be serious.” John’s voice is deadly quiet.

“What?” Sherlock asks, because John has spoken so low that the boy may not have heard him much less understood the numerous boundaries that he has just crossed in their relationship.

“I was the other side of town, having dinner with my *wife*!” John shouts out, voice rising in that shaky, uncontrolled way that Sherlock seems to have a knack for bringing out in him.

That catches Sherlock’s attention. He jumps slightly in his seat and looks up at John, eyes wide. “Well there was no hurry,” he tries to placate, but it is too late for that now.

“Sherlock, I….You….” John literally splutters around his words because he is so angry and there are so many things that he wants to say to Sherlock, so many things that he wants to yell at him, that it all just seems to want to come out at once. But one sentence beats its way past all the others.

“Sometimes you make it very hard to love you, do you know that?”

That gives Sherlock pause. He continues to stare at John from his seat, but there is a change in his face, a darkening of his eyes, a tightening of his mouth. He looks wary now, the way he always does when he puts his guard up around John, afraid of getting hurt. “Then why do you bother?” he asks quietly.

“What?” John’s tone is perhaps a little too harsh but he is still so, so angry.

“Why do you love me?” Sherlock asks again, with more emphasis behind his words.

That draws John up short. He is angry with Sherlock, yes, but he hadn’t meant for his words to come out that way; he hadn’t wanted Sherlock to take them to mean that loving him is more of a burden than anything else. “Sherlock, I…” he begins, but he doesn’t know what to say, his anger melting away suddenly and leaving behind a sickening kind of guilt. “You know why I love you,” he answers instead, evading the question.

“Do I?” Sherlock asks him, and he suddenly looks very tiny and young sitting behind his microscope.

“Yes. You know everything,” John states, as if it is simple fact. “Of course you know why I love you.”

Sherlock just shakes his head slightly, not denying that he already knows, but not confirming it either. “I don’t see what you see in me. Tell me,” he presses.

“I don’t know, Sherlock,” John growls out, throwing his hands up again, frustrated and angry once more. Sometimes he hates these games that the boy plays. “I shouldn’t. God knows that I shouldn’t love you. I shouldn’t be doing this,” John tells him, looking him straight in the eye. Sherlock stares back at him unblinkingly, as if challenging him.

“You make it hard to love you anyways, you know that? You’re insolent and rude,” John starts ticking things off on his fingers. “You have no respect for people’s boundaries or personal lives. You’re tactless. You can be cruel; I’ve seen it. You can be selfish; I’ve seen that, too. You’re unbelievably moody, even for a teenager—”

“I thought I asked you why you love me, not how I annoy you,” Sherlock interrupts him with a derisive scoff.
“—But none of those things compare to how brilliant you are,” John finishes with a determined huff of breath and a steely set to his shoulders. “How wonderful everything about you is. How much you care about the things that you love. How beautiful your mind is.”

He walks purposefully up to the boy in his chair and takes hold of Sherlock’s shoulders, pulls Sherlock up to stand next to him, right in front of him so that they are face to face. He lifts a hand to trace his thumb along the soft flesh of Sherlock’s bottom lip. “That sharp mouth of yours. The way I can’t ever decide what colour your eyes are. The way your hair curls. The smell of you.” John pulls Sherlock to him and breathes in the scent of him at the delicate juncture where his neck meets his shoulder. “God, the smell of you,” John mumbles into Sherlock’s skin, kissing him softly and feeling Sherlock shiver against him. “How you feel in my arms, like you were made just for me. I love the way you make me laugh. How you’ve brought me back from a sad, empty life where I had nothing and you made me feel again. I love how you’re brilliant, and sweet, and so needy. How you’re broken, and lonely, and sad, just like me. I love how you don’t make me feel alone. I even love how immature you are.” John pauses for a moment and reconsiders his words. “I love it sometimes,” he amends immediately. And then right after that, “I kind of love it.”

He laughs because he knows that it’s true and Sherlock smiles right along with him before he continues. “I love how you make my head spin and my heart pound and how I never know what comes over me when you’re around. You make me crazy, but I know that’s all right because God knows you’re out of your mind, too. I love everything about you. I love all of your sharp corners and all of those edges. I love every single one of your perfect little imperfections.”

They stare at each other for a moment in a dazed silence, John blushing profusely because he hadn’t meant to say any of that.

“How can you see me like that?” Sherlock asks him, a frown creasing the smooth expanse of his forehead and crinkling the corners of his eyes. “When you look at me, you notice all of the bad stuff but you only see the good. How do you do that?”

John smiles at him, placing a small kiss on Sherlock’s perfect lips. “It’s not hard,” John tells him honestly. “You’re beautiful. Every single thing about you, no matter how horrible you think it is.” He wraps his arms around Sherlock and holds him tight, lets Sherlock hide his face in John’s warm shoulder. “This life might be trying to beat you down but you’re a fighter and I love that about you, too. You give all you have to me, Sherlock, and for that I will love you irrevocably, no matter the consequences. I’d risk everything because of how much I love you. Everything I have, Sherlock. Everything inside of me and every fibre of my being loves you. All of me loves every single bit of you.” He places a kiss to the top of Sherlock’s head. “Don’t ever forget that.”

“How can I possibly deserve that kind of love, John? The kind of love you have for me?” Sherlock asks him, a stunned look on his face. “I don’t deserve a perfect love like that.”

“Idiot,” John says with a small smile, kissing him softly on the tip of the nose. “There isn’t any other way for me to love you, Sherlock. This is it. I can’t love you any differently.”

John continues to hold him like that for a long time, and Sherlock clings back, obviously desperate for any kind of contact John will give him. John has to constantly remind himself, over and over again, that Sherlock doesn’t get the kind of physical human attention that a child his age would normally get on a daily basis. Sherlock doesn’t get reaffirmed declarations of love from anyone in his life.

There is only John. Only ever John.

He sighs and feels like a prat for saying what he did, for making Sherlock feel so insecure about
himself and about their relationship. Sherlock seems willing enough to forgive him, however.

John just wants to forget the whole thing, so he pulls away from Sherlock slightly and asks, “So, what is this fruit experiment, then? I’m most likely kipping on the sofa tonight when I get back home, anyways, and I’m here already, so I might as well be useful, yeah?”

Sherlock seems to want the change in subject as well, because he leaves the comfort of John’s arms readily enough and picks up something in the crate on the floor by the leg of his desk chair. “It’s pineapple,” he says, holding it up with his index finger and thumb by one of the top leaves, looking at it with disgust.

“Yes, I see that,” John says dubiously, frowning at the boy. He has learned to be wary of Sherlock and his “experiments”.

Sherlock tries to thrust it at him, but John won’t take it. “I need it opened,” he states imperiously.

For a moment John doesn’t know what he’s talking about. He simply stares at Sherlock, frowning in confusion.

“Every time I try, it pokes me!” Sherlock shouts out, glaring at the offensive fruit.

“Oh!” John says with a laugh, suddenly understanding.

He watches as Sherlock tries to dig his fingernails into the pineapple like one could with an orange but is met with hard resistance and another small stab of its spiny covering. “I don’t know how these work,” he whines, picking at it. “John, how do these things work?”

John chuckles as he takes the large fruit from him, mindful of its hard skin. “You have to cut into them. With a knife,” he explains. “Come on, we’ll need a proper worktop, not your desk.”

He exits the room, Sherlock following close behind him as they make their way down the hallway.

“How many of these did you buy?” John asks out of curiosity.

“There are four crates full of them in the kitchen.”

“I’m sorry,” he says to Mary as soon as he enters his house later that night after leaving Sherlock’s. He is covered for once in something other than come (or yeast) but still feels in desperate need of a wash. The sticky juices of the pineapple cling sweetly to his skin and his clothes where they are stained despite having washed his hands at least half a dozen times. He doesn’t know exactly what he’ll say to Mary if she asks where he went, because he can’t really come up with an excuse that involves a pineapple-related emergency, but he figures he’ll just have to try his best.

She doesn’t ask though. She just sits in their living room, telly off, and stares at him, mouth a grim line and eyes set in dark disappointment.

That is almost worse than the yelling.

“What you did,” she says quietly, looking as if she is about to cry, “that was embarrassing, John.”

“I know,” he agrees wholeheartedly. “And I’ve no right to treat you that way. I’m sorry.” He feels awful for what he did, he truly does. He has always felt bad for lying to his wife about having an affair, but this is completely gut-wrenching and nauseatingly sickening. He thinks the guilt
might be starting to actually eat away at him. “I know it doesn’t help anything, and in the past I’ve said it and not meant it, but this time I really do mean it,” he tells her. He hopes like hell that she believes him, gives him at least some sort or reprieve from the stomach-churning feeling of remorse roiling within him. “I don’t know what came over me; I shouldn’t have left like that.”

Mary opens her mouth, as if she wants to say something, but then closes it again. She looks away from him, bites her lip, and just nods her head, accepting his apology. She walks past him silently as she makes her way to the stairs and he feels like a complete prat for being the one to ruin the delicate balance of domesticity that they had started to build up around them.

*  

He still tries to make it up to her the next day. It is Saturday, and there has been a play that she has wanted to go see for a while. So John steels his resolve and shuts off his mobile and doesn’t think about Sherlock for the whole day. Well, he tries to anyways, and mostly succeeds. He also doesn’t try to sneak off that night with the tired old excuses of “meeting Mike at the pub” or “going to help Mike catch up on some grading”.

Mary enjoys the day immensely, he can tell, and they have a good time together. Conversation is halted and uneasy, but at least it doesn’t dissolve into a row at any point. And even though she never says anything directly, John can tell that she is grateful to him for the attention he is paying her, for the day he has devoted to her. When they get home she kisses him—once, lightly—on the lips, before wrapping her arms around him in a hug that feels familiar and yet strange all at the same time. He lifts his arms to hug her back and has some trouble finding the right places to hold, the natural contours of her body where he had once fit so easily.

Before he can get used to the feeling of holding her in his arms she pulls away, a small smile on her lips. Then she turns to head up the stairs, the silence between them not quite as heavy as it has been over the past few months.

*  

When he enters Sherlock’s bedroom on Sunday evening, John has barely even set down his mobile and keys on Sherlock’s desk before Sherlock is looking up at him. His quicksilver eyes flash as he takes in the guilty look on John’s face and he processes everything he sees while John stands before him. Then he goes dangerously still, face turning hard and emotionless and eyes sparkling hazardously. “She kissed you,” Sherlock says softly, tone deadly.

“I, er…” John stutters, because he doesn’t exactly know what to say. He shouldn’t have to lie to Sherlock about the fact that his wife kissed him—it kind of comes with the territory of having an affair in the first place—but something in Sherlock’s eyes makes John want to say no.

“Don’t lie to me, John. I told you that I would be able to tell,” Sherlock says lowly, dangerously, seeming to read John’s mind. Then, just as John is about to open his mouth to ask how he knows, Sherlock rattles off his deductions.

“You’ve been making things up to her, spent all day yesterday with her, didn’t answer a single one of my texts. She’s been more comfortable with you today, has stayed physically closer to you than she usually does. I can smell her on you.” His face crinkles slightly in disgust, and John tries hard not to blush. “How many times has it been, then? Once,” he answers himself and then corrects his deduction a split second later when John winces. “No, twice now. And you let her, both times, because you didn’t know what else to do.” He pauses for a moment and his eyes narrow to tiny, angry pinpricks as John doesn’t contradict him, doesn’t say that Sherlock got anything wrong even though the boy knows that he didn’t. “I’m very disappointed in you, Mr. Watson,” Sherlock
growls out lowly, voice gravelly with anger.

“Sherlock, I—”

Sherlock moves suddenly towards John, and the look on his face is so furious, so livid, that for a moment John fears that he may be hit. He brings his hands up, palms facing outward as a show of supplication, but Sherlock doesn’t slow. In fact, he reaches a large pale hand of his own out and grabs John’s left wrist tightly.

John makes a small sound of surprise and tries to pull away from the boy, but Sherlock bends John’s wrist backwards sharply and the noise that John makes next is one of pain. It takes his brain a few moments to comprehend what is happening because he never expected it in a million years. He was a trauma surgeon, he was a soldier, he was a field medic, he went to war for fuck’s sake—but the realisation that a sixteen year old boy who is slightly over 9 stone (and who just happens to be his lover) is suddenly grappling him, shocks John like nothing else. By the time his brain suddenly kicks back online and he realises that he should be doing something to defend himself, Sherlock already has a leg up on him.

Later, John will blame it on Sherlock having the element of surprise and the fact that John didn’t fight back because he didn’t want to hurt the boy. Whatever he tells himself, though, doesn’t change what ends up happening.

Sherlock is pushing bodily into John, forcing him to back up against a wall. John is suddenly aware of an insistent tugging on the finger of his left hand, where it is still in Sherlock’s tight grasp. He tries to push Sherlock away but the teen is already halfway to accomplishing his goal. When John realises just exactly what that goal is, he tries to pull his hand away from Sherlock desperately. The ring is already sliding off of his finger, though, and John only succeeds in helping to yank the tight piece of metal over his top knuckle, where it practically falls the rest of the way off.

Sherlock’s fingernails leave burning scratches all down his ring finger, but John hardly feels it. He is suddenly scrambling after Sherlock as, prize in hand, the boy bolts to the other end of the room, towards the open—

“Sherlock, don’t!”

But it’s too late. The small, plain, battered ring goes sailing out the window. John reaches the sill just in time to hear his wedding ring thud softly against the grass of the yard outside, but he doesn’t see where it has landed.

“Sherlock, you…you…” his mouth opens and closes repeatedly, no sounds coming out. He can’t believe what has just happened; he doesn’t even have words for how angry he is right now.

“You look better without it anyways,” John hears from behind him, but he doesn’t turn around to look at Sherlock. His eyes continue searching fruitlessly for any sign of his wedding ring in the tall, unkempt grass outside. “It added 10 stone of blonde bitch to you. Highly unattractive.”

“Jesus Christ,” John chokes out, finally giving it up as a bad job and leaning back into the bedroom, turning on Sherlock in sudden, mounting fury. “Jesus fucking Christ, that was my sodding wedding ring! Have you come completely unhinged?” he shouts out, advancing towards Sherlock, but the brunet holds his ground, staring him dead in the eye. “How am I supposed to get that back? What the hell am I going to tell Mary?”

“That’s quite simple,” Sherlock says cheekily. “You can tell her that you’re fucking me and that
you don’t love her anymore. How about that idea, John? How about telling her the truth instead of just stringing me along and going back to her every night, leaving me here alone?” He makes a vague gesture to encompass everything around him: his tiny little bedroom, where he shuts himself away when his father is home; his house, where he spends most of his time because he has nowhere else to go, no other friends or family; his life, where there is no one except for John, who spends a few hours with him and then tosses him aside to go back to his regular life.

“Maybe I was wrong about what I said before we had sex,” Sherlock says, his words cutting through John’s thoughts. “Maybe you would fuck her, too, if you had the chance. You’d like that, I bet: shagging your wife and your barely-legal piece of arse on the side.”

“Shut up, Sherlock,” John chokes out through clenched teeth, voice gone rough and breath gone jagged in his anger. “Just shut up.”

But Sherlock seems to have had enough of listening to John. It happens again, just like the time in Sherlock’s kitchen. One moment Sherlock is standing there in front of John and then the next he explodes in a flurry of anger and movement, throwing things like shrapnel scattering across the room, an IED that has caught John completely unaware. Anything he can reach, anything he can get his hands on, he lobs John’s way. Books, his science equipment, old tea mugs—nothing is safe.

“What could you possibly do, John,” Sherlock continues, voice cracking and finally, finally, as all the anger seems to leave Sherlock and only the hurt and the pain seems to remain, John can get close to him, can reach out for him. “What could you possibly do that could hurt me more than knowing that she kissed you, and you just let her?” He falls into John’s arms, seemingly spent after his tirade, beating at John’s chest angrily with his fists.

John wraps his arms around the boy and runs his fingers through Sherlock’s hair soothingly, petting him. “Shh, it’s all right. I’m sorry. I wasn’t thinking and I’m sorry.”

Sherlock shakes his head against John’s sternum. There are choked little sobbing sounds that he tries to keep in as he wipes the tears from his eyes on John’s shirt before they can fall. “You said that you wouldn’t hurt me. You said that you’d never make me hurt like this, like everyone else has.”

“Sherlock, I—”

“I know that it’s smartest if we wait until the end of the school year, and I know that she’s still your wife,” Sherlock interrupts him, voice cracking and fingers tightening in the front of John’s shirt. “But you didn’t even try to stop her when she kissed you. I can see it written so clearly in the guilt on your face.”

“I’m sorry, love,” John says brokenly, pressing a kiss to Sherlock’s forehead. He hates hurting Sherlock like this, hates hearing the pain in Sherlock’s voice, seeing it on his face. “What can I do? What do I do to make this better?”
Sherlock lifts his head, looks at him desperately. His eyes are red and his lashes have clumped together from the unshed tears that he has rubbed away on John’s shirt, and he bites his lip anxiously. “Stay with me again this weekend,” he whispers, hands clenching at the fabric on John’s chest. “The whole weekend. Just the two of us. Show me how much more you love me than her. Let me know that I still belong to you.”

It kills him to say no, but he knows he can’t say yes. “Sherlock, love…I can’t do that. I—we’re—I have to go to Mary’s grandmother’s birthday with her this weekend, out in the country. Her whole family is going and it will look odd if I don’t, if I have to cancel on her last minute. I won’t be able to lie to her about where I’ll be for a whole weekend, and if I don’t go with her she probably won’t go at all.”

“But I just don’t understand, John,” Sherlock shouts, pounding both fists lightly on John’s chest once more in frustration. “Why wear her ring, why let her kiss you, why go to all of these places with her, if you don’t love her anymore?”

John’s hands come up to untangle Sherlock’s from his shirt and hold them softly in his own. He looks Sherlock in his tear filled eyes, even though it is painful to see the hurt in them. “I may not love her anymore, but I still care about her. There is a difference. Don’t tell me that I don’t care about her,” he whispers, almost pleadingly. “She’s still my wife.”

At that, Sherlock’s whole face seems to crumble. “So then I guess that means that I’m just your quick fuck on the side?”

“No,” John says viciously, dropping Sherlock’s hands to cup the brunet’s face with both palms, running his thumbs along those impossible cheekbones, wiping away silent tears. “Never. But there are certain obligations I still have to Mary.” He kisses Sherlock once, softly, a barely-there press of lips. “You understand, don’t you?”

Sherlock shakes his head as if to say no, but only sighs. “Just…tell me that you love me. Please? Will you just say it, so that I can hear it? So that I can pretend for just a little while longer that it’s true.”

John makes a pained noise in the back of his throat and reaches out to grab Sherlock and crush the boy to him in a bruising hug. “I’m risking everything for you, Sherlock,” he says into the top of Sherlock’s head, fingers tangling in dark curls. “I’m risking everything that I have to be with you. How can you think that I don’t possibly love you?”

“You’re choosing her over me,” Sherlock whispers into his neck, so soft that John can barely hear him. “Just like I always knew you would.”

“No,” John says, pulling away from Sherlock and shaking his head. “No. I would never. I just have certain obligations to her still. But it won’t be like this forever. It will get better, I promise. We just have to wait until the end of the school year. Then I won’t be your teacher and you’ll be off to university…” John trails off and kisses him, and it is wet with tears and frantic with unfulfilled promises.

“You just have to promise not to leave me behind,” John says when he finally pulls away. “Don’t leave me here, without you when you go, please. I love you so much. I’m sorry about what I’ve done. It’s unforgivable. Never again, Sherlock,” he whispers with a small shake of his head. “I promise. I won’t let her touch me ever again.”

Sherlock only sighs into his skin and holds on to him tighter, not saying a word.
John ends up telling Mary that he got mugged while walking downtown that evening, and that they took his ring, watch, wallet, and mobile. He has to bin his watch with more than a little reluctance. It is a very nice square face Tag Heuer that Mary had gotten him for his birthday last year with diamond-tipped hour indexes, a stainless steel buckle, and a black leather strap which matched his donkey jacket perfectly. He hates that he has to let it go, but there really is nothing else for it. Then he goes about methodically cutting up his credit cards before binning them, too, along with his wallet. He sighs when he does it, thinking of the hassle he is going to have to go through to get all of his bank cards and his driver’s license reissued, but he can’t think of any other excuse for losing his wedding ring and his mobile.

Mary believes him readily enough, even if she doesn’t seem overly concerned about his well-being. They spend the rest of the evening in silence, but John hardly notices; all he can think about is the look on Sherlock’s face earlier when he had asked John to stay with him for the weekend. John wishes like hell that he could, but he had told Sherlock the truth when he said that he couldn’t. He misses Sherlock so much, though—even since they spent that weekend together, the stolen afternoons and evenings that they sporadically share with each other aren’t nearly enough. And now he is going to have to spend a whole weekend away from Sherlock, with his wife…

No, that just won’t do at all, he decides. He’ll do something with Sherlock before he leaves, just the two of them, all day long. Sod work and sod school and sod the chances of getting caught. He owes Sherlock that much, at least.

London, he thinks decisively as he settles into bed that night, pulling the duvet around him and reaching a hand out to click off the bedside lamp, throwing the room into darkness. Mary rustles under the sheets next to him, but he barely even registers the fact that she is next to him. His mind is on more important things.

They’ll go to London before he leaves with Mary for the weekend and they’ll spend the whole day there, where no one knows them and they can be together, enjoying each other’s company. Sherlock will love going to London with him, John is sure of it.

Yes, John thinks as he drifts off to sleep, a large smile on his face. London will be perfect.

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John doesn’t see Sherlock in school on Monday, and he wonders if the boy is avoiding him. He doesn’t like the thought of that very much, so after his lessons at the end of the day he heads straight to Sherlock’s house, discovering it empty and unlocked once more. He finds the teen holed up in his bedroom, occupying himself with an experiment.

“You didn’t come to school today,” John says by way of greeting as he lets himself into Sherlock’s room, stopping by the bed and keeping his distance from Sherlock, who is sitting at his desk.

“Mmm,” Sherlock says noncommittally, not looking up from his microscope.

John tries not to let it deter him, but it is hard. “You didn’t text me after lessons, either. Were you not going to ask me to come round?”

Sherlock shrugs, still not making any move to look at him or invite him closer, keeping himself closed off from John. “You can do whatever you like. You certainly did yesterday with your wife, and today as well when you came over.”
That hurts, but John supposes he deserves it. “Do you not want me here? I’ll go, if you really want me to.”

Sherlock doesn’t say anything and John tries not to let the hurt flit across his face. “Right,” he says, and turns to leave, because he’s not going to stay and make a fool of himself. “Right, I’ll just leave, then. Sorry.”

He turns to go, fighting the impulse to throw himself at Sherlock’s feet and wrap his arms around Sherlock’s waist, when the sound of a deep voice behind him makes him pause.

“You expect too much from me.”

The words are said so casually, apropos of nothing, and John hates how Sherlock can shut away all emotion as if it is just so simple. “What?” he asks, stopping in the doorway.

“You expect too much,” Sherlock repeats, and John turns around to find the brunet has finally looked up from his microscope and is staring at John now. His eyes are unfathomably light underneath his dark, curly hair and secured directly on John. “You always have. You wanted me to ‘fix you’ and make you better so badly that you didn’t stop to think if any of it was actually real. You put me up on a pedestal,” he accuses John point blank. “You think I’m something special, something amazing, something brilliant, when I’m not. I’m not any of those things that you say I am. All of this life in me that you say that you love…it’s not real,” Sherlock stresses, looking for all the world like a little lost child staring back at John. “I fake smiles and I force laughs. I bite my tongue against all of the caustic things I really want to say because I know you don’t like it when I’m intentionally or purposefully cruel or thoughtless. But I am intentionally cruel and thoughtless. All of the time. You think I’m rude when I’m around you, but you don’t realise that—when you’re around—I’m actually trying to be better, because I know you expect more of me. I try harder for you, and it’s still not good enough. Everything that I do for you, it’s all a part that I play for you, because you asked me to. You needed me to. But all of it, every single thing…I can turn it all on and off like a machine. You need to know that. You deserve to know that none of this,” he indicates himself with a sweep of his hand, “is real.”

He looks at John with something like fear in his eyes, as if he is afraid of what John will think of him, now that he’s told John this. “It’s only fair of you to know that before you make any decisions. None of what you see in me is real. I pretend at being human. I may have moments where my emotions come through, but more often than not I just lock them away, because I can’t be bothered to feel them,” he says with a shake of his head. “I stay awake for an unhealthy amount of days, I refuse my body sustenance until I finally crash and break down, because it’s all just transport to me. And even though I hate to admit it, my body can only take so much until it’s finally had enough, and that happens more often than not because of how hard I push it. And I need you here to take care of me afterwards, because I can’t take care of myself. I never could. Yet you think that I can hold the weight of the world for you because that’s what you need me to do. You need me to be your everything, and so I am.”

Jesus, is that what John has really expected of the boy? He had never intended for that to happen, he doesn’t see their relationship that way, but he knows that doesn’t mean anything—he sees nothing, after all, and Sherlock sees everything.

“But it’s all just an act, John, like everything else in my life. None of it is real. I hate this life and everything about it save you, and even that I can’t have the way that I want because you’re married….I’m none of the things you believe I am. You’ve built me up in your head, and what’s going to happen when I finally fall apart?” he asks plaintively. “Because that will happen, John. It’s happened before. That’s why the cocaine…” he trails off, eyes sliding away from John in a
look that the man has come to know is shame. Sherlock stares hard at the ground, avoiding John’s
gaze and frowns, shaking his head as if he doesn’t understand something and he is trying
desperately to force it to make sense in his head. “You deserve better than me, John. You’ve
given up everything you have to be with me. But I’m broken. You shouldn’t have given up
everything you have.”

A sob tears its way out of Sherlock’s throat, choked and raw sounding. John pulls him into a tight
hug and lets him cry into his neck for a moment, then he grabs Sherlock by the shoulders and
pushes him back to face John clearly. “Listen to me, Sherlock. Everything that I have is right
here, right in front of me. Do you understand?” John asks him, giving him a little shake, wanting
Sherlock to understand. “And all of that stuff that you said…you’re wrong. I don’t have you up
on a pedestal and I don’t believe that you can work miracles and heal me. I never expected you to.
You’re just a kid,” John says, for what feels like the hundredth time. “A kid who has had a shit life
but hasn’t let it drag him down and drown him. That’s what I mean when I talk about how
incredible and brilliant you are. What you’ve done, how you’ve survived, that is what amazes me
about you.” He pulls Sherlock back into a hug, because he wants Sherlock in his arms. John holds
him for a moment, just savouring the feel of him, warm and solid and

“You’re wrong, you know,” John says after a long moment of silence. “You are human. A strong
one. And it’s that strength that leaves me in awe of you, not the miracles you believe that I think
you work. You’re not broken, Sherlock,” John tells him with a tender smile and small shake of his
head. “You’re human. I love you more for all of your flaws than I would if you were perfect. I
don’t want you to be a machine. I want you to feel.”

John stays there with Sherlock all evening long, just holding him, until he can’t possibly stay any
later, and forgets all about mentioning London to him.

*

The next time John goes to Sherlock’s—planning to tell Sherlock that he has a trip to the city
planned for them that day—it is early on a Tuesday morning before school. John walks in to
Sherlock’s parent-less house and the first thing that he notices is the frigid air inside. The heat
must be out in the house, John figures. He hopes it hasn’t been off for too long, but as he slips
inside Sherlock’s home, he notices that everything inside is dark and quiet.

“What happened?” John asks when he finds Sherlock in his bedroom, pulling his heavier blue
winter jacket tight around him and huddling into his own body heat. It is still unseasonably cold
outside and he can practically see his breath inside Sherlock’s bedroom.

“I may have forgotten to pay the electricity,” Sherlock tells him underneath a thick layer of socks,
pyjamas, a dressing gown, two thin jackets because he doesn’t have anything thicker (since he
would rather spend the money Mycroft sends him on cigarettes and science equipment) and several
blankets.

“Christ, Sherlock, it’s freezing in here!” John says, exasperated. He was going to take the boy to
London today anyways, but now it seems like a sign that the trip that he has planned is a good
idea. “Come on, you can’t stay here,” John tells him, searching Sherlock’s dark room for some
clean clothes. “We’re going out.”

“But John, this is the perfect opportunity to run some experiments on how the cold affects the
growth rate of bacteria!” Sherlock protests. He struggles out from under his cocoon of layers to
glare at the man as John holds up a shirt to the bright morning light filtering in through the window
to make sure that it is clean. “Besides, don’t we have school today? What day is it?” he asks,
confused, and John tries not to worry that Sherlock may be missing days again.
“School starts in half an hour, and you don’t look like you have any intention of going. If your excitement over your new experiment is anything to go by, you were probably going to stay here all day long and work.” He shakes his head, tossing Sherlock some clothes. “That’s not happening, I’ll tell you that right now. You’ll freeze to death. Come on, get dressed,” John tells him, a wide smile splitting his face. “We’re going to the city.”

That catches Sherlock’s attention. “The city? London? You’ll really—it’s okay if we go there together?”

John shrugs rather nonchalantly, but inside he feels just as excited as Sherlock suddenly looks. “I don’t see why not,” he says, trying to sound offhanded. “It’s a big place and everyone in this town seems to try to avoid it. I don’t think we’ll run into any trouble.”

He laughs as Sherlock throws off his warm layers of protection and struggles into his clothes. “Come on,” John says, holding out Sherlock’s thickest coat for him. “We can have a meal together out in public for once. And then I’ll take you to some museums.”

“Can I—can we…” Sherlock blushes and looks down, under the pretext of fixing the buttons on his shirt, “hold hands?” he finishes shyly, face darkening in the dim light shining in from the single window of the bedroom.

John’s heart stutters in his chest and his smile grows almost too big for his face.

“I won’t let it go the entire time, Sherlock. I promise.”
Sherlock absolutely loves London. John can see it in the way he lights up, hear it in Sherlock’s voice as it increases in speed and volume while he is pointing things out to John, as he deduces strangers lightning-quick and talks nonstop about anything and everything around them.

“Didn’t Mycroft bring you here to look at universities when you went with him?” John asks him, trying not to grin like a fool at how much Sherlock is enjoying himself, or at how much he is enjoying Sherlock’s happiness. He has never seen Sherlock look quite so carefree, quite so unhindered, quite so young and childlike and content before. It warms John’s heart to know that he did that for the teen, and that he gets to share that with Sherlock.

“Please,” Sherlock scoffs, pulling a face that John laughs at when he sees the reflection of it in the window of the car—Sherlock has had his nose plastered to the glass ever since they entered the city. “As if he would let me go to a public university in London. He took me to Cambridge and Oxford and some other stuffy old universities in boring places that I’ve already deleted. He said that he thought I would be too distracted in a big city like London, easily pulled off course. He says there’s too much temptation for me. He wants me to go where my mother or father went to study, where he went. Mycroft would have a myocardial infarction if I told him that I wanted to come to London and study at Imperial College or Queen Mary University.”

John doesn’t disagree with him, knowing what he knows of Sherlock’s overbearing brother.

“So, where do you want to go first?” John asks him, eyes on the road in front of them, which is slick from the light rain that has been falling all morning. It is still early yet in the day and they have hours ahead of them to enjoy. Together.

“Actually, I was wondering if we could go to Baker Street in Westminster,” Sherlock says in a decidedly offhand manner that doesn’t have John fooled for one second.

He spares a moment to take his eyes off the road and throw Sherlock a glance. Just as he suspected, Sherlock is flushing; John can tell by the colour of the back of his neck as he stays facing away from John, between his hairline and the top of his scarf. “Baker Street?” John asks, eyes sliding back to the road. “What’s on Baker Street?”

“There’s a woman there who owns a building with a couple of flats in it,” Sherlock tells the passenger window vaguely. “Owes me a favour.”

He won’t say another word about it to John after that.
It isn’t until he pulls up to the kerb and they get out, the “To Let” sign glaring in one of the windows, that John understands what they are doing here.

“Sherlock, this is in central London,” he says, closing his door and waiting on the pavement for Sherlock to come round. “You’d never be able to afford this on your own.”

“Don’t worry,” Sherlock says dismissively. “Mrs. Hudson, the landlady, is giving me a special deal.” John waits for him to elaborate. When he doesn’t, John clears his throat; a strong sign that he wants Sherlock to continue his explanation.

Sherlock sighs, annoyed, but humours him. “A couple years back her husband got himself sentenced to death in Florida. I was able to help her out.”

It’s still vague, but becoming slightly clearer. “You stopped her husband being executed?”

“Oh, no. I ensured it.”

John frowns at him. “Walk me through it, love,” he says, holding his hand out and keeping Sherlock from making his way towards the door to building 221 by grasping Sherlock’s arm. “You’re going to have to walk me through it.”

Sherlock sighs louder this time, and when he talks his words are a hurried jumble. John can sense that he doesn’t want to be telling this story—he wants to be inside 221 Baker Street, looking at a potential flat. So John tries his hardest to follow Sherlock’s harried and convoluted story before the boy ends up dashing off and leaving him behind.

“The rehab facility that Mycroft sent me to was in the States. Florida. He wanted me as far away from his career as possible, so he tucked me into a quiet little corner where no one would find out about me. But I found someone,” Sherlock tells him with a smirk, as if remembering how good it felt to know that he had gotten one over on his brother in such a way. “An older woman named Martha Hudson. Her husband was the leader of a drug cartel and she had gotten in a bad way with some of his product. Actually, to be more accurate, he used her to test out new shipments. He kept her strung out most of the time.”

For a moment John can actually see Sherlock visibly bristle in indignation as he recalls this part of the story, and John thinks about the implication of that—that there is someone out there in the world that Sherlock cares enough about to worry over in such a way. “She finally overdosed one day and her sister took her away and put her into rehab. While we were at the facility together, I got to know more about her life, her husband, and all of the things he was doing. She was worried that after she got out of rehab he was just going to go after her again, drag her back to that life. Apparently he had done it before. So I helped her out…” he trails off with an inconspicuous shrug, clearly done talking. He is literally vibrating with his need to go inside and check out the flat, and John knows that he won’t be able to hold Sherlock still for very much longer.

John lets go of his arm and Sherlock all but flies to the heavy black door of 221, lifting the old-looking brass knocker and dropping it a few times before stepping back and waiting on the stoop. Then he clasps his hands patiently behind his back as John comes to stand on the pavement behind him.

When the door opens, it is to reveal an older woman, looking very put-together in a smart, solid coloured plum dress with matching stockings, makeup done subtly and a kind smile on her face. It seems to take her a moment to recognise the teenager standing on her doorstep, and John has to
wonder just how much Sherlock has changed in the year since he has been out of rehab. The doctor guesses even a few months of good, healthy living can make a difference, especially when you are young and your body is in its vital growing stages. Either way, Mrs. Martha Hudson seems to like what she sees immensely, because her smile goes from politely small to manically joyful as she remembers the face of the boy before her.

“Oh, Sherlock!” she cries out happily, throwing her arms around the brunet, and John is surprised to see the teen reciprocate the hug, wrapping his own arms around her tightly. There is a soft smile that John has only ever seen a few times on Sherlock’s face, sliding easily over his lips. “It’s so good to see you again!” the older woman says, pulling away from Sherlock to look him over, bringing weathered hands up to cup his cheeks, staring at him intently. “Staying clean and sober, young man?” she asks, a hard edge creeping into the softness of her voice.

Sherlock just smiles at her, a soft, indulgent dip of his plush lips. “Of course, Mrs. Hudson,” he answers immediately, and John can’t help but feel a small swelling of pride at his answer because John knows that he is a part of Sherlock’s recovery, a part of his abstinence.

“Have you come to look at the flat, then?” Mrs. Hudson asks him excitedly. She glances behind him for the first time, at John waiting patiently on the pavement behind him. “There’s two rooms,” she says, taking a step back and letting them into the building. “If you’ll be needing them,” she amends, and there is a mischievous glint in her eye that has John blushing and looking away from her suddenly. It makes him think for the first time that it is possible that there might be some people out in the world who may not be bothered by his relationship with Sherlock. He has honestly never allowed himself to think about it before.

As if the older woman’s comment has reminded him of the man, Sherlock makes a noise in the back of his throat and steps to the side, making a gesture towards John. “Sorry, Mrs. Hudson, this is John. John, Mrs. Hudson,” he formally introduces. Then he turns back to the landlady. “John is my sobriety partner,” he tells her with a cheeky grin.

“How about you look around,” Mrs. Hudson snarks back, just as sarcastic.

Sherlock gives her a sharp smile and then takes off up the stairs, a ball of boundless, youthful energy. John is left at the bottom of the steps for an awkward moment, not sure what to do, staring uncomfortably at a woman who may or may not be all right with the fact that he is buggering a sixteen year old boy.

“Go on up and have a look around,” Mrs. Hudson tells him, making a shooing motion with her hand. “If you aren’t there to have a say in anything he’ll make plans to fill up every square inch of that place with his junk. I heard he’s a nightmare to live with—made every single one of his roommates at the rehab facility cry their first night in.”

John wants to tell her that she has it wrong, that he isn’t moving in with Sherlock, but he wants to leave the oppressive discomfort of the conversation more. So he just ducks his head and jogs up the stairs, entering a dusty flat that has light streaming in brightly through two rather large windows facing the door. The rain clouds that had been dropping a light drizzle earlier that morning while they drove in have long since vanished, leaving behind a clear, bright sky.

He can hear Sherlock already searching through other rooms of the flat, making his way noisily into and out of each one until he comes back down the stairs of the top floor where John assumes one of the bedrooms is, cheeks flushed happily and eyes glinting.

“Isn’t it perfect, John?” he asks breathlessly, coming up close behind the man in the sitting room and wrapping his arms low around John’s waist, resting his chin on John’s shoulder.
“Perfect for what?” John wants to know, his own arms coming up to rest on top of Sherlock’s.

“For us, of course,” Sherlock states, as if it’s obvious.

At that, John frowns, not quite catching on. “What do you mean?”

“For after I’m finally out of school,” Sherlock explains, and he looks at John like the man is a lovable fool. “I can go to university here in London and you can finally leave your wife and we can start our life together.”

“Oh, Sherlock…I…” he doesn’t know what to say, he is completely and utterly speechless.

He thinks about what Mike had asked him before, about what they are going to do once Sherlock finishes school. He thinks about how he wasn’t able to answer him because he didn’t know, wasn’t sure what Sherlock was going to want to do after he was done with his A-Levels. He has never really let himself dwell on it for too long despite the things he has promised Sherlock, because he has been certain deep down that Sherlock will go off to a fancy university somewhere and leave him behind—silly old John Watson who wears old-man cardigans and teaches biology at a secondary school and is in a loveless marriage. But knowing that Sherlock is making plans for a future together, with him…it simply takes his breath away.

As soon as the euphoria settles in, though, it is almost immediately pushed aside by worries and doubts.

Would Mycroft allow Sherlock to go to university in London? What would the boy’s older, overbearing brother think of his sixteen year old sibling moving in with a man twice his age? Would Mary grant him a divorce? Would someone find out he was living with a former student and dig into their relationship, and find out it started while John was still Sherlock’s teacher? What work would John find in London to support himself—and Sherlock if need be—while Sherlock went to university, if Mycroft decided to cut his brother off in a fit of rage?

None of that, though, seems to concern John overly when he thinks about the fact that Sherlock is still going to want him after he finishes school, after he is able to leave and live his life and make something great out of himself. Sherlock will still want John there beside him while he does all of that, and that knowledge alone is enough to make John’s breath catch in his throat.

“Yeah,” John agrees quietly, in awe. “It’s amazing.”

At that, Sherlock graces him with a dazzling smile, almost as bright as the London sun shining in through the curtain-less windows in front of them. He disentangles himself from John and drifts over to the kitchen, a good-sized area with nice appliances and a clean looking worktop that Sherlock immediately begins mumbling about filling up with all sorts of biohazardous, unspeakable things. John can’t help but lean against the door frame of the partition between the kitchen and the sitting room, watching as Sherlock pokes into each crevice of the room, opening every single cabinet and talking about where to keep the more caustic chemicals.

Would he really trade it in, he thinks to himself? He’s told himself that he has made a decision, but would he really do it? Give it all up? A wife; a good, stable career; a house in the suburbs; the chance at children and a dog and a restored marriage? Give it all up for this? A small, dusty flat attached to a sandwich shop and a teenage lover half his age who will try to keep body parts in the fridge? A mad genius, ex-addict who is constantly bored? Would he trade in a nice, quiet, small town for the sounds of London that used to keep him up at night?

Hell yes, he would. In a heartbeat, in a second, in an instant. It would take him only as long to
give up his former life as it took for him to catch up to Sherlock Holmes.

And that had never been very long at all.

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After they leave Baker Street they take a walk past shops and people, tourists and Londoners all going about their hectic day.

In the middle of a crowd of people, there on the busy pavement, John reaches out and catches Sherlock’s hand in his own as if it is the most normal thing in the world. Sherlock’s steps falter slightly as their fingers intertwine and he looks down at their joined hands in stunned silence, his eyes wide. He glances back up at John with a small frown of confusion on his face, as if he can’t comprehend what is going on.

“Is this what you had in mind, love?” John asks casually, not looking at Sherlock and trying to bite back a smile.

“I…er….” Sherlock stumbles on his words, face blank, still looking down at their joined hands as if he just doesn’t understand what John is doing.

Then, slowly, John feels Sherlock’s hand grip his own back. His hold is cautious and he fumbles with John’s hand as he tries to find the best way to hold it. There is a moment where their fingers dance around each other’s before Sherlock finds a position that feels right to him. John patiently waits for him to get comfortable with what is happening.

“Is this,” Sherlock starts and then stops to clear his throat. He tries again. “Is this all right?” he asks, voice almost small enough to get lost in the sounds of the city around them.

John looks at him and lets his smile grow. Sherlock looks so adorable at this moment, worried over how he is holding John’s hand, that John can’t help the upwelling of love he feels for him.

“You’re doing it wonderfully, love. It’s perfect,” John assures him, squeezing his hand.

Sherlock’s answering smile is shy, with an accompanying blush. They continue walking, and John can’t help but notice that Sherlock’s eyes constantly stray to their connected hands, as if he is reassuring himself that it is real. He squeezes Sherlock’s fingers again to show him that it most certainly is real, and it is not going to stop anytime soon. John had told him they could do this all day long, after all.

They continue to hold hands the entire time they walk aimlessly down the busy streets, blushing and giggling about it like school children but enjoying themselves immensely. When they pass a particular shop that caters to men’s clothes, Sherlock sees a coat that catches his attention. It is a sharp looking number in a dark blue material that seems to be nicer than any piece of clothing Sherlock has, barring what Mycroft sends him perhaps. It is a calf-length Belstaff that looks to be far warmer than any coat Sherlock has ever owned, never having anyone who cared overly about being sure that he was dressed appropriately for England’s changeable weather. John empties half of his personal savings account buying it for him, the one that he keeps separate from Mary, and doesn’t even think twice about it. They purchase it in a larger size, so that it will last through a few more of Sherlock’s remaining growth spurts that John knows he is bound to have soon.

They spend the rest of the day doing nothing of importance, Sherlock wrapped comfortably in his new, warm coat and the circle of John’s arms. Later in the afternoon, Sherlock inexplicably wants to go to a seedier side of town for an early dinner and won’t take no for an answer. John doesn’t
understand these strange impulses that the boy gets and tries to convince him to go somewhere else, but Sherlock’s mind is rather firmly made up. Sherlock says that he wants to see everything London has to offer; John has the odd feeling that he just wants to do something dangerous and thick-headed.

Sherlock will not be deterred, though, even when John suggests a nicer dinner somewhere more romantic. He just snorts at John’s offer and says that it is “boring”.

So John sighs and they catch the tube to a side of town that John hasn’t visited since he was on leave for the Army, and even then only with friends. They make their way to a dirty little pub that John knows about, where the company isn’t great but the food is good and the beer is better. As they approach the place, he can hear it before they even get to the door, and smell it not long after, and something in his stomach swoops in warning. John looks over at Sherlock walking beside him, eagerly trying to make his way into the pub, and John wonders why he can’t ever seem to tell him “no”.

Just then Sherlock turns to him and gives him that dazzling, heart-stopping smile.

Oh, John thinks stupidly to himself, all other thoughts fleeing his mind as he stares at Sherlock unabashedly, mouth hanging open slightly. That’s why.

And just like that they enter the dingy little pub that John used to frequent rather quite a lot in his Army days, so he remembers the kind of people who spend their time there. He pulls Sherlock protectively closer to him when they go inside, already feeling eyes on them.

John sits them down at a table by the door and tells Sherlock to keep his coat on for good measure. A lot of the men in the pub have been off at war for an untold amount of time, and he knows they would do anything to get a leg over on someone as gorgeous and young as Sherlock—the boy doesn’t have to taunt them with wide open collars and flashes of too much pale skin and tight fitting dress shirts.

Sherlock sits while John goes to order their drinks and food, and they make it through most of their dinner without incident. They are done with their meal and enjoying the last of their drinks when John suddenly feels a heavy hand on his shoulder from behind him.

“Well, I’ll be damned,” a booming voice says over his head, cringingly familiar. “If it isn’t John fucking Watson!”

John turns around, already bracing himself, to see Bill Murray, an old RAMC mate, behind him. John stands to say hello, drawing himself up tall against his friend. He hasn’t seen Bill in an age and he has forgotten just how much taller the man is than him. It has always made him slightly uncomfortable, though he doesn’t let it show. “Bill!” he says genially, a wide smile on his face as he claps the man on the back. They may not have been best mates, but it is nice to see someone from the old squad again. “You on leave? They haven’t kicked your sorry arse out yet?”

Bill has never been known for his politeness and tact. Quite the opposite, in fact.

“Not yet, Johnny. Wouldn’t know what to do with myself if they did,” Bill replies, his cheeky smile widening. He looks well, from what John can see of him, underneath his coat and skull cap. Fit from his training, still. Bill has always been muscular and well-built, with wide shoulders and a slim waist. The complete opposite of John’s smaller, somewhat stockier frame. “What you got over there, then?” Bill asks him, jutting his chin at Sherlock, still sitting silently across the table from them.
“Oh, sorry,” John says, stepping out of the way so that they can say hello. “Bill, this is Sherlock. Sherlock, this is Bill Murray. We were stationed together in Afghanistan; he was in my squad,” he tells Sherlock.

“Nice to meet you,” Sherlock says offhandedly, and John can tell that he isn’t really very interested in meeting any of John’s friends—anything worth knowing about the man Sherlock already knows, and anything else Sherlock wants to learn he knows that he can just ask.

“Pleasure,” Bill replies, eyes glued to Sherlock in a way that John doesn’t like.

Sherlock doesn’t seem to notice, though. Instead, he simply stands and tells John, “I think I’ll go get another Coke. Want one?”

“Sure,” John says, reaching into his wallet and pulling out a couple of quid to give to him. He watches Sherlock walk across the pub with some trepidation, not noticing until he turns his head to the side slightly that Bill is watching him, too.

“Where’d you pick that one up at, Johnny?” Bill asks him with a low, appreciative whistle as he commandeers one of the empty chairs at their table, the one across from Sherlock’s empty seat. John’s jaw clenches, but he sits next to him. “He’s pretty. I think I might go out and find me one for tonight, too. Or maybe I can just use yours after you’re done with him.” He winks lasciviously at John and jostles him with an elbow that is meant to be good-natured, but it only makes John’s jaw tighten even more and causes his shoulders to square tensely.

“He’s not a slag, I’m not paying him,” John informs his friend, voice tight and clipped. “We’re together, so it would do you well to watch what you say.”

At that, Bill stares at him in amazement. “Really, now?” he asks. “Well, good job, mate. Looks like you picked yourself a really nice one.” He smirks at John, the curve of his mouth oily and lewd. “I’d wager he’s good at sucking cock—look at those lips. Tight, too, I bet.”

John almost bites through his tongue in an effort to keep from going off on his friend. Underneath the table his hands are clenching and unclenching in shaking fists, but he schools his face into a mask of cold indifference. “It would be in your best interest to change the subject, Bill. Now.”

Bill laughs amicably. “Yeah, all right,” he says, grinning in the face of John’s obvious irritation. “No need to get angry. Just admiring another man’s things, nothing wrong with that.”

Across the pub, John can see Sherlock begin to make his way back towards them, so he decides to forcefully change the subject for Bill before the boy returns and the other man says something to make Sherlock uncomfortable. “How long are you in town for?” he asks his friend, and Bill thankfully submits to the change in topic as Sherlock reaches the table and sits back down.

* 

It takes a little while, but Bill finally ends up saying that he should head home, clapping John one last time on the back and telling him that they should get together again sometime. John makes some sort of noncommittal comment that they both know is a lie and Bill saunters away from their table, leaving them alone at last.

They decide to head out immediately after Bill’s departure, but John feels the very strong urge to piss after the couple of pints he drank. He tells Sherlock to wait for him while he uses the loo and he leaves the boy alone at the table as he heads off in search of the toilets. He is gone for only a couple of minutes, but when he comes back out his gaze goes to the table where he had left
Sherlock. He stops short when he doesn’t see Sherlock there. A panic immediately grips him and he searches the pub, not having to look far—Sherlock is standing against the wall right by their table, back pressed up to it and Bill Murray crowding into him from the front, intimately close. As John watches them, Bill ducks down so that his face is almost pressed against the side of Sherlock’s neck and moves in even closer.

John sees red.

He stops in the middle of the pub, staring at the scene before him and taking stock of what is happening, trying to make sense of it.

He can see that Sherlock is attempting to shove Bill away from him, but Bill is a lot bigger than Sherlock is, taller and heavier. John can also see that Bill’s hands are moving over Sherlock’s body, touching and grabbing, trying to get underneath Sherlock’s coat. Bill has his face pressed firmly into Sherlock’s neck now, where John can only assume Bill has his lips against the boy’s skin, tasting him, while Sherlock turns his head away and tries to push Bill off of him.

John doesn’t even think twice about it; he walks up to his friend and grabs the back of his coat in a tight grip, hauling him off of Sherlock roughly. Bill may be almost a head taller than John, but John has always been stronger, especially when he is angry.

“What the fu—?” he hears Bill say, but John doesn’t hear the rest of it because he is shoving his friend through the door of the pub, knocking him into other patrons. John hardly even notices. Bill twists in his hands to face him and John lets him, giving Bill one final push before they are both out the door and onto the pavement, John following close behind him.

Once they are outside, John doesn’t hesitate. He reaches for Bill and punches him in the face, hard, hearing bone crack under his fist. He watches with a sick sort of satisfaction as Bill stumbles under the force of his hit, one hand coming out to steady himself on the side of the building as the other comes up to cup his face.

“John!” Bill squawks, holding a nose that is now gushing blood over his fingers. “What the fuck, mate? Have you gone completely mental?”

“I told you to leave off!” John shouts out at him, throwing another punch. This one connects with Bill’s chin in a satisfying *thud* that sends the man stumbling back into the wall of the building again. “He’s not some slag that you can pick up and take home with you! You’ve no right to touch him, no right to even look at him!”

Bill brings a hand up to protect himself as John draws back again and the blond quickly assesses his options. John is a doctor; he knows how to sprain bones. But he is also a soldier; he knows how to break them, too. The problem now is finding the line separating the two and deciding which side of it he wants to be on. Bill is his friend; Bill has risked his life for John and John for him. There is no bond stronger than that which forms between men during war. It is the ultimate definition of trust.

But Sherlock is his. Sherlock is easily taken advantage of and Sherlock needs his protection.

And Bill touched him, put his lips on him, rubbed up against him.

John will kill him.

He lunges at the man, getting in close where he knows it will be harder for Bill to protect himself from John’s punches. However, once the shock of being attacked by a friend wears off, Bill’s
combat training kicks in and he starts fighting back.

They grapple with each other for some time and Bill manages to get in a few good, solid hits of his own to the side of John’s face, but a well-aimed knee to Bill’s stomach knocks the wind out of him long enough for John to gain the advantage. He pushes Bill up against the wall nearest them and uses it for leverage as he lays into the taller man, holding Bill up with one hand clenched tight into his jacket as the other connects repeatedly with Bill’s face. The skin of John’s knuckles slides slickly through sweat and blood in a way that he doesn’t even register as he continues to hit Bill, over and over and over.

It isn’t until John hears Sherlock behind him—saying his name in a voice that is loud and urgent, repeating it—and there is the feeling of hands on his arms trying to pull him away, that he lets go of Bill. The man slumps to the ground without the assistance of John holding him up, face bloody. John stares at his friend for a moment in shock, watching as Bill tries to sit up, spitting out blood, before John lets Sherlock pull him away. A crowd has gathered around them without John noticing, and Sherlock is quickly trying to make their way through it.

Before they can get very far, however, they hear Bill call out from behind them. “All that fuss for a piece of arse, mate?” His voice is thick and his words are heavy and slightly slurred, as if his lips can’t form the sounds right. “You’re losing your bloody mind. He won’t stick around, Johnny. Look at him, why would he?”

John tries to turn but Sherlock only grips him tighter, not letting him. He ends up wrenching himself away from Sherlock and turning back to Bill. The man has struggled to his feet and is glaring at John. The front of Bill’s dark jacket is covered in blood from where it has poured out of his nose. The sleeves are black with it, as well. John can see where he has tried to wipe his face off on them.

“Then I’ll just have to kick the next bloke’s arse the way that I kicked yours,” John tells him, deadly quiet, voice menacing and face set in hard lines. “And the one after that,” he continues, because he knows—he knows—that this won’t be the last time something like this happens. This won’t be the last time that John is jealous over someone else, this won’t be the last time that someone or something comes along and tries to take Sherlock from him. He knows that it will keep happening, but John will be damned if he will just sit back and let Sherlock be snatched away from him, like everything else in his life has been. “No one is taking him away from me, you understand? I won’t let them.”

John gives Bill one last look of contempt before he turns away from him. He takes Sherlock’s hand in his own, his knuckles bloody and bruised. He makes his way through the crowd, intent on taking Sherlock somewhere far away, where they can be alone together.
"Well, that went spectacularly pear shaped," John says tiredly as he sits on the closed lid of the toilet inside of flat 221b back at Baker Street. He had insisted that they clean up before heading back home, but the only place that they could think of to go to was Mrs. Hudson’s building. So John had taken his small first aid kit out of his car and they had asked the woman if they could use the empty flat for just a little while, to wash up and rest for a bit. She had said of course they could and had even told them that there was a bed left up in one of the rooms if they needed to stay the night, handing them some extra sheets that John insisted they didn’t need but that he took anyways, just to get her to go away.

Now he settles heavily on the lid of the toilet and lets Sherlock clean him up for a change. It is strange having their positions reversed. Discomfiting.

"Why did you punch him?" Sherlock asks quietly, voice small in the silence of the bathroom as he dabs at the dried, crusting blood on the side of John's face. John can feel that the blood has caked into the hair at his temple, making it stick to his skin and pull at it irritatingly.

"What?" He doesn’t quite understand what it is that Sherlock is asking him. Surely Sherlock knows, so why is he wanting John to say it out loud?

"Why did you punch him?" Sherlock simply repeats unhelpfully, not clearing anything up.

John looks up at Sherlock, where he is standing in between the man’s knees. The flannel Mrs. Hudson gave them is wet with water and stained with blood in his large hands. “Because he was harassing you, Sherlock.”

“How do you know that?” Sherlock stresses, rubbing harder at John’s temple, trying to get the blood out of his hair and making John wince slightly. “Maybe I came on to him while you were gone; maybe I made the first move. Maybe I wanted him to kiss me. Anyone else would think that of me.” His hands fall away from John’s face, leaving them staring at each other. Sherlock looks down at John with large, unfathomably colourless eyes. “You’ve thought it before,” he reminds John, implying the incident with Mike at school, his tone only slightly accusing. “But this time…it didn’t even cross your mind.”

John’s neck is starting to hurt from the sharp angle of looking straight up at Sherlock but he doesn’t try to stand. He just brings his hands up, running them along the sides of Sherlock’s long legs, his hips, his stomach. “I trust you, Sherlock.” John tells him. “Implicitly. Before, when I felt jealous, it was because… I didn’t know how deeply you loved me. I didn’t know that you were going to want me in your future, after you finished school, and I was always so scared that you would end up leaving me.” He thinks about earlier that morning, when Sherlock had come up to
him in this very flat and talked about starting a life with him, about wanting John there with him, about not leaving him behind. “But now that I know how much you care about me, that you’ll still want me even after you graduate and go off to uni…I trust you to never hurt me like that.”

“I won’t, John,” Sherlock says with a shake of his head, eyes wide and hair wild, flying about his face. “I won’t hurt you like that. Ever. I’m sorry I let him—”

John surges up from where he is sitting on the lid of the toilet, presses up against Sherlock’s front. The boy’s head follows his movement, their eyes never leaving one another’s. “You don’t ever have to be sorry for something like that, Sherlock. That wasn’t your fault. Do you hear me? Do you understand?”

Sherlock looks at John, so close to him, and doesn’t say anything, doesn’t do anything, for a long moment.

“Answer me,” John orders, voice clipped as he watches Sherlock stare at him. “Say it.”

“Yes,” Sherlock whispers, and then John is kissing him as soon as the word is out of his mouth, hard and deep. He grips Sherlock’s thin arms in each hand, digging blunt fingers into Sherlock’s skin and pulling him impossibly closer to John.

Their mouths smear together in heated puffs of air and slick tongues, and when Sherlock whimpers against his mouth John knows that he won’t be able to control himself. He curses inwardly, because he hadn’t planned on buggering Sherlock in the middle of the day on a trip to London and he is woefully underprepared, but they are in an empty flat and John has always been able to improvise in a pinch. It would be a shame to waste an opportunity, after all.

“Bedroom,” he pants against Sherlock’s kiss-swollen lips, twisting them around in the tight corner of the loo where the toilet is, between the tub and the sink. “Through there.” John points to the frosted glass door of the bathroom, the one that attaches to the en suite instead of the main entry, and pulls away from him, giving Sherlock a gentle shove towards the bedroom.

“Aren’t you coming?” Sherlock asks, looking back at him when he notices John isn’t following.

“In a minute. Go in there and wait for me,” John says as he turns to the first aid kit that Sherlock had sat precariously on the edge of the sink. He digs hurriedly through it as Sherlock frowns at him in confusion but listens to his instructions and exits the room. John hardly notices the look as he continues his desperate search through his first aid kit. He knows he had packets of it in there, somewhere, he knows he did. He had seen them. Small squares of sterile alcohol pads and strips of gauze fall out over the sides as John continues to dig through his kit, almost frantically now, before he finally sees them, down at the very bottom.

“A-ha!” he says triumphantly, smiling broadly as he looks at the small packets. They are tiny squares of medical grade lubricant, in convenient one-time use pouches. There isn’t much in each one—really they are only meant for use on nothing more invasive than a thermometer—but luckily there are about a dozen of them. John grabs up a handful of them and makes his way out of the loo, into the bedroom where Sherlock is waiting for him. What he finds, though, makes him stop dead in his tracks, mouth falling open slightly and cock filling out rather rapidly in his trousers.

Sherlock is lying on the bare bed in the middle of the empty room, naked, spread out like a veritable feast of pale, sinful flesh. His cock is hard and flushed, resting against his abdomen as he strokes it slowly in the loose circle of one hand while his other fondles his balls. His long, elegant legs are spread wide on the bed, seeming to take up most of it, reaching almost from corner to corner. He is exposing himself so lewdly that John wonders how anything on earth is supposed to
resist temptation, if it is made to look like Sherlock Holmes.

“Jesus,” John breathes. “Look at you, you gorgeous creature.”

“John,” Sherlock whimpers, stroking himself, once, slowly, his hand dragging across the stiff, reddened flesh of his cock and John can’t stand it for one second longer—he has to touch Sherlock or he will die.

Tossing the small packets within easy reach on the bed, John quickly undresses, getting tangled in his own shirt sleeves in his rush to have Sherlock’s bare skin pressed up against his own. He crawls onto the bed, over the boy, in between Sherlock’s spread thighs. John settles on top of him, gathering him up in his arms and holding him, warming him, covering him. The tip of Sherlock’s cock digs into the soft, round flesh of John’s lower stomach and he can feel his own erection twitch in response to it, seeking it out. John shifts his hips so that their groins align, and the sounds that he pulls from Sherlock’s throat when their cocks press together is positively sinful. Sherlock throws his head back and shuts his eyes, and his grip on John’s bare shoulders tightens so much that the fingernails digging into John’s flesh hurt. John thrusts again, just to hear the sounds that Sherlock makes and to see the look of pleasure on his face.

John sets a slow, steady rocking motion and stares down at Sherlock, watching this beautiful, mad, brilliant creature fall apart beneath him. It seems strange to him that he can take Sherlock apart so thoroughly, when it seems like that is all Sherlock ever does to him. John thinks about how, exactly, Sherlock shatters him, how Sherlock is pulling his life and his sanity apart at the seams; he’s so in love with Sherlock that he is cheating on his wife, he is risking his career, risking his freedom if he were to get caught, risking his morality, risking his safety, risking himself. He is hurting the woman who he had married with his secretive actions—the secret rings to his mobile, the texts, going out to meet Sherlock at all hours of the day. He is dragging Mike into his lies with him, and now he is even hurting friends that he would have died for in the past, all for Sherlock. Is it worth it, he wonders? Is the boy worth all of this?

He looks at Sherlock beneath him, naked, panting, vulnerable and beautiful and his, and the answer is so clear. So simple.

Yes. Yes, of course Sherlock is worth it. Worth this and so much more, John knows.

He drops his head down to kiss Sherlock softly on the lips, but when their mouths meet he tastes a salty wetness, tangy against his tongue. He pulls back instantly, worried.

“What? What is it, Sherlock?” he asks, looking down at him in concern. “What’s wrong?”

Sherlock’s eyes slide away from his, afraid to meet them, and he chews softly at the inside of his bottom lip. “It’s just that…I’m afraid, John,” he confesses on a desperate whisper.

“Afraid?” John repeats, at a loss. Sherlock is always so tempestuous that to see him afraid of something is strange; it doesn’t suit him. Sherlock isn’t meant to be afraid of anything—Sherlock is meant to overcome every obstacle in his path. “What are you afraid of, love?”

Sherlock’s eyes stare up at him, a mercurial gaze that is taking in everything about John. Sherlock’s heart beats in time next to John’s, pressed so close together that the frantic pounding can be felt between them.

“I know what you’re thinking. I can see it when you look at me,” Sherlock tells him, and of course Sherlock knows what John’s thinking, of course he does. John forgets that Sherlock can read him
like a book, that Sherlock knows him better than anyone John has ever been with. John can’t ever hide anything from Sherlock. Every thought that John has, every doubt that John feels, Sherlock knows about. Sherlock knows about, and processes, and stores away in his bloody great big mind palace to be gone over later; to be obsessed over, deduced and torn to pieces, and irrationally thought of as the reason that Sherlock is alone, with no one in his life.

“I’ve made a mess of everything,” Sherlock continues, voice cracking under the weight of the tears he is trying to hold back, “of your life—and I’m…I’m sorry. Just, please, don’t hate me. Don’t leave me. You can blame me if you need to, just please don’t leave me.” His hands tighten around John’s shoulders, fingernails scraping against flesh. Sherlock looks frightened, young and heartbreakingly childish. “Everything will be okay, you’ll see,” he promises, and he sounds desperate now. John can do nothing other than bring his hands up to run through Sherlock’s tangled hair, trying in vain to soothe him as he continues to speak, his voice cracking and wavering. “We just have to stay together. We just have to have one another and everything will get better. I’m sorry that I’ve fucked everything up for you, it’s just…I love you so much…”

“Sherlock…” John whispers, shushing the boy with a kiss, soothing him with a gentle press of lips against his own, “you haven’t fucked anything up, love. Nothing. And I am not leaving you. I promise. I don’t blame you for anything, and I certainly don’t hate you for anything.” John wonders what he can say that he hasn’t already said, what he can possibly do that he hasn’t done yet, that will make Sherlock understand. That will make Sherlock see that these feelings John has for him, this flame that he carries only for Sherlock, will never be extinguished, will never go out.

He is prepared to do anything for Sherlock. Prepared to burn for him. He always has been. Sherlock is a raging fire, every single thing John could ever desire, calling out to him like a siren in the night. And John is a man on a wire, risking all that he has for the love of his life. It breaks his heart that Sherlock still thinks John will leave him.

“I want you, Sherlock,” John tells him, cupping his face as he lies on top of him with their naked bodies pressed against each other, and kisses him. “Nothing else. Just you.”

Sherlock kisses him back but stays silent when John pulls away, staring at the man with wide, wet eyes as if he still doesn’t believe John. “How could you want to be with someone like me?” Sherlock asks him after a long silent moment, a small frown creasing his forehead. “You’re so…you. Good. In every way. And I’m just me.”

John smiles at that, because for once he knows an answer to something that the genius doesn’t, and it’s so achingly obvious. “Yes,” he states. “You’re you. Sherlock Holmes. And that’s why.”

He says nothing more about it because nothing more needs to be said.

John lowers his head once again and kisses him, tongues and teeth and tears mixing together. Sherlock’s hips rock back up into John’s, cock straining and hard, body yearning under him. John desperately wants to take him but before he can he needs to know, needs to know what Sherlock wants for their future, where Sherlock sees them in a few months’ time. John has hidden from these questions for long enough, but he knows that he can’t ignore them any longer. Not after today.

“What do you want, Sherlock?” John asks him gently, carding his fingers through Sherlock’s curls. “Tell me. You want to move to London and you want to go to university here, and you want to live at Baker Street, and you want to become some sort of private detective and keep bees—”

“—Consulting detective,” Sherlock interrupts with a watery chuckle.
“—and you want me to be here beside you when you do it all. But what do you want from me, Sherlock?” he stresses, not letting himself get distracted by semantics. “I’ll give you everything—happily, in a heartbeat—you just have to tell me what it is you want, so that I know, finally, for sure. No more doubts, no more worries, no more fears,” he promises. He’ll promise Sherlock anything, everything, he just has to know once and for all what exactly it is that he is promising. No more guessing, no more uncertainties. No more hesitation.

Just them. Just this.

Sherlock stills underneath him, body going soft and pliant. His changeable eyes widen and he stares up at John in silence for a moment before taking a deep, shuddery breath and answering, his voice shaky and low, “I want you, John. However you’ll let me have you. Whatever you’ll give to me; whatever you’ll let me have. I want you to kiss me. I want to live with you. I want to know that I’m the one you’ll be coming home to at the end of the day. I want to know that I’m the one you love—the only one. I want to watch horrible telly with you, and complain about my idiotic professors and uni classes to you. I want you next to me when I finally pass out from sheer exhaustion at night, and I want you there when I wake up in the mornings. I want you to force me to eat meals. I want to fight with you and make up with you. I want to hear you laugh when you’re happy and swear when you’re angry. I want you to tell me that you want to make love to me, and I want you to call me ‘baby’ and ‘love’ and all of those other horrible names you seem intent on calling me. I want you to fuck me. I want you to tell me that I’m brilliant and amazing and gorgeous. That’s what I want, John. I want all of that. Forever.”

John looks down at him for a moment, and then, after a silent second of careful consideration says, “Yes,” with a decisive nod of his head. “Yes, I think I can definitely give you all that.” And he dips his head to kiss Sherlock once more.


“Yeah,” John agrees, pressing a messy kiss to Sherlock’s lips because he suddenly needs that very much, too.

He reaches out blindly for his little packets of lube, finding them by pure luck and tearing them open one by one with unsteady fingers until he feels he has enough in his palm. Sherlock sits up and watches him with rapt attention until John is ready to prepare him, and then he lies back down and stretches out his arms for John to come back to him, spreading his legs in a wicked invitation that John is powerless to decline.

He settles back down against Sherlock, his mouth finding Sherlock’s so naturally he hardly even notices that he does it, hand dipping under the boy’s balls between his thighs. John opens Sherlock up slowly, gently, one finger slipping inside so subtly that there is no resistance, no friction. Just the small gasp of surprise from Sherlock, the shaky release of breath as he gets used to the penetration, and then Sherlock is bearing down on him, opening up to take more of him. John quickly slips another finger in, impatient just like Sherlock, and the teen’s body takes him so beautifully that it barely feels like anything at all.

Three fingers is tight, though. Three is always so tight. Sherlock pants underneath him and squirms so deliciously, pushing down onto John’s digits delightfully, making John’s cock twitch in anticipation, leaking from the slit. Sherlock wants so much. Sherlock always wants. He wants more, always more. And John always wants to give it to him.

Three fingers is tight, though. Three is always so tight. Sherlock pants underneath him and squirms so deliciously, pushing down onto John’s digits delightfully, making John’s cock twitch in anticipation, leaking from the slit. Sherlock wants so much. Sherlock always wants. He wants more, always more. And John always wants to give it to him.

He pulls his fingers out of Sherlock, intent on filling him again, but Sherlock gasps at the sudden loss, the emptiness inside of him, and John just has to put his mouth against Sherlock’s. John has to kiss him, has to hold him, because that sound is so heart-breaking, so despondent, that John just
wants to embrace him and let him know that everything is okay, everything will be okay soon.

“I love you,” he whispers against Sherlock’s lips, dry from panting. “I love you so much, you have
no idea. I love you so much that I don’t even know what to do,” he confesses.


And then Sherlock reaches down between their bodies and takes a gentle but firm hold of John’s
cock, making the man gasp, and guides it towards his own open hole. Sherlock shifts his body
underneath John’s so that he can align himself, and soon they are slotted together perfectly. John
can feel the head of his cock breaching Sherlock’s entrance, still tight even after stretching.
Sherlock moves his hand so that he can press himself onto John’s prick, sliding along the man’s
shaft in an agonising slowness that has John panting and wincing above him, arms shaking on
either side of Sherlock’s head.

“Jesus, fuck,” John groans when he can’t take it any longer, pressing his hips forward in a rush and
bottoming out inside of Sherlock.

After everything that has happened over the past several days, they slip easily into one another and
it feels right, like missing pieces of a puzzle finally coming together. Like shelter and comfort and
belonging. He feels whole again, he feels complete. John would do anything to keep Sherlock
here with him like this, safe under him and tight around him.

He moves his hips slowly, already feeling close to the edge, right on the precipice. Sherlock does
that to him, all of the time. Takes him to the verge and leaves him there, desperate. But John
doesn’t want this to be that way right now. He wants this to be soft, slow. He wants to drown
Sherlock the way that Sherlock drowns him. He wants Sherlock to know. He wants Sherlock to
know just how wonderful John thinks that he is. He always wants Sherlock to know, to never
forget. He would do anything for Sherlock, give up anything, throw away everything, fight
anyone. And he wants Sherlock to know why.

“You’re so incredible, you know that?” John tells him, panting against Sherlock’s neck as he
thrusts into the warmth of his body, making Sherlock gasp. “You’re brilliant and fantastic and
gorgeous. And you love so strongly, Sherlock. You have the biggest, fiercest heart of anyone I’ve
ever met and that heart is just as glorious as that amazing, beautiful brain of yours, and I need you.
I need everything that you are. I need you to save me because I’m afraid, too, Sherlock. I’m
scared of who I am when I’m around you.”

Sherlock shakes his head minutely, his hips meeting John’s movements with every thrust, their
bodies in sync just like their heartbeats. “You shouldn’t ever be scared of that, John. You’re you,”
Sherlock assures him, large hands coming up to card through John’s short, greying hair. “You’re
kind. So very kind, and passionate, and brave. My brave soldier.” Sherlock kisses him, and it is
so tender that John thinks his heart might break, then pulls back to look the man in the eye as John
thrusts into him. “I hate that your wife doesn’t see the best parts of you, and yet I’m happy, too.
Happy that only I can see this, see the real you. That only I can have this John Watson, the real
one. Not the shadow that you show people.”

John doesn’t understand how Sherlock can see him that way. How Sherlock can see him as some
sort of strong, valiant, wonderful man.

John is nothing.

John is a mess. He’s a broken human being who has a temper and gets jealous easily. Who will
always limp slightly when it’s damp or cold outside, and who can’t raise his left shoulder above a
ninety degree angle. He swears constantly and drinks too much. He likes things done a certain way, and he hates being argued with when he tells someone to do something, and he has control issues.

Sherlock knows all of this about him, though, and loves him anyways. Sherlock knows him like no one else has ever known him, and Sherlock still wants him.

“My soldier, my hero, my John,” Sherlock whispers against his mouth, pressing kisses there between each softly spoken word, and John is left speechless, stunned.

He is blown away by the sheer force of Sherlock’s love for him, the gravity of it. No one has ever loved John as fully as Sherlock has, for everything that John is, good and bad, for everything that John was and can possibly be. John marvels at it. Marvels at the amazing feeling of being loved unequivocally by someone who understands his mind, who acknowledges his flaws and adores his soul anyways.

He presses his lips against Sherlock’s, because he doesn’t know what else to do; John kisses him desperately because he is afraid that none of this is real, that this will all slip away from him, and in the next instant he’ll be left with nothing. Against his tongue, the flavour of Sherlock rises in his mouth, familiar and warm and beautiful. Sherlock tastes like a chance, a risk, a new start. He tastes like home. And when John finally pulls away from him, he has found words, ineffectual as they may be.

“I’ve never wanted anything more, you know,” John whispers, moving inside of him, deep. “I’ve never wanted anything more than what you give me. It’s all that I need.”

Sherlock groans against him, rolling his hips into John’s, trying to speed up the movements, but John won’t have it. He keeps his thrusts unhurried, languid. The leisurely drag of skin on skin is a honey-thick push-pull against one another’s body. He can feel his orgasm gathering deep inside, a slow-building warmth that heats him from the inside out in a pleasant tingle, not like the raging wildfire that usually burns out of control between them, within them, scorching everything around them. This is softer, more intimate. This is something different, something unspoken that is changing between them. They have made promises for the future to one another now, where before there was only a blank uncertainty; doubt and what-if’s.

Now there is them, together. For certain. Soon.

There is this: kisses and caresses and soft sighs and gentle thrusts against each other. They can have this, for as long as they want. They are coming together here in this room with a new future revealed to them, each holding the other’s wildly beating hearts gently, trying to soothe and calm with soft kisses that taste like promises in the darkness.

They take their time with each other in this moment because they know that they have more of it now, more time, and that they won’t run out of it again, like they have in the past.

When they can no longer last—when their bodies are straining against each other and their heartbeats are so ragged that they feel as though the only thing keeping them alive is the breath they give each other when they kiss—only then do their movements become harsh and desperate and sharp. John pushes himself in forcefully, making Sherlock cry out. Sherlock’s legs drop open wider, shifting the angle imperceptibly. That is all that John needs, though. His body shifts with Sherlock’s, hitting his prostate and making Sherlock clench tightly around him, and then John is tumbling through the fiery haze of his climax, moaning as he feels it rise inside of him.

“Fuck, Sherlock,” he manages to gasp out in warning. “I’m—I’m coming.”
His hips stutter and he gives one last shove, buries himself deep inside of Sherlock, where he feels warm and protected and safe. He can feel his cock twitching as he empties himself inside of the boy, his head dropping down to Sherlock’s because he doesn’t have the strength to hold it up any longer. John kisses him—deep, languorous kisses—and stays buried inside of him, wishing he never had to leave.

After a few seconds, he pulls back for breath and sees Sherlock looking up at him with a desperate shine in his eyes, like he is drowning in John, suffocating under him, and yet he still wants more of him, can never get enough.

John knows exactly what that feels like.

“Come on, love,” John tells him, voice soft and breathless from orgasm and wonder. “I’ve got you. Come for me. I want to see it.”

He looks down the length of their bodies and watches as Sherlock wanks himself slowly, indolently, John’s cock still hard and stiff inside his body. It isn’t long before Sherlock is gasping and the come dribbles out of the tip of his cock and onto his pale skin, slipping down the side of his stomach. It leaves behind a slick trail that shines in the light which John chases with his tongue, pulling out of the boy finally so that he can reach it all, making Sherlock shiver against his mouth.

They lie on the bare bed in Baker Street, London’s weak dying sunlight streaming in through the curtain-less window. Sherlock looks up at John, still kneeling between his spread legs, and they stare at one another as their stomachs press against each other’s with every deep gasp of breath they take. John slowly lowers himself onto Sherlock’s thin frame, gathering the teen up in a hug and holding him close as John feels his arms begin to tremble. He tightens his grip on Sherlock, thinking that will stop the shaking, but his whole body breaks out in tremors as he presses Sherlock to him. John knows Sherlock can feel the vibrations, but the boy doesn’t say anything. He just wraps his long arms around John’s back and buries his face in John’s neck, breathing deeply, fingers tangling in the short hairs at the nape of John’s neck, letting John hold him.

So John does. John holds him as they lie in a strange bed in an unfamiliar flat, and he feels more at home than he has ever felt in his life. John shakes from the power of it, scared of how right it is; how he knows, deep in his bones, that he will never be happy with anything else.

And he understands: he isn’t himself anymore. He has been devoured by flames, turned to ash. He is in pieces. Something different, something else.

But it is fine. Because Sherlock knows how to make him whole.

“Stay with me,” Sherlock whispers into his chest. “You’re all I have in this life. Stay here with me.”

“Forever,” John responds instantly. He doesn’t want to move, but he knows that he should dig through his discarded clothes for his phone, so that he can send another pitiful excuse to Mary as to why he isn’t home. He clambers off of the bed and paws at his clothes until he finds his mobile, then he crawls back over to Sherlock, cuddling him tight. Over Sherlock’s head, John sends off some lame excuse about a guy’s night out with Mike, and how she shouldn’t wait up for him to come home because he will be late. Then he turns his ringer off and tosses his phone to the edge of the bed, already forgotten in favour of the feel and smell of Sherlock around him. He has no intention of going home tonight, and he only hopes that Mary will fall asleep early, so that he can he can tell her he stumbled in late and left for work early the next morning.
He puts it out of his mind, though, intent to think about nothing but Sherlock and the way the teen clings to him. They fall asleep wrapped tightly in each other’s arms on a sheet-less bed in Baker Street in the middle of London, ignoring the world outside.

*

He is shaken awake during the middle of the night. The feel of the room in the darkness around him is unfamiliar and for a moment he begins to panic, soldier’s instincts kicking in. But the warm hand on his bare shoulder feels familiar and the sound of the deep voice close to his ear instantly soothes him, if it makes him slightly annoyed as well.

“John. John, are you awake?” Sherlock asks, shaking him rather violently.

“No,” John groans, trying to turn over and away from the boy, hoping Sherlock will take the hint and let him go back to sleep.

He does not.

“Yes, you are,” Sherlock says, and he sounds confused that John would lie to him about something so obvious.

John just sighs. “No, I’m really not.”

“Then why are you answering me?”

John huddles into himself, curling into the fetal position, hoping Sherlock will understand that he doesn’t want to be woken up in the middle of the night to have a conversation. “It’s a survival mechanism when I’m with you,” he mumbles into the arm that he is using as a pillow, eyes kept firmly shut, as if opening them will signal his surrender to the boy.

Sherlock is not amused.

“John, stopping fooling around, I have something important to ask you,” he says, sounding annoyed now. “How many human limbs do you think we can fit into that fridge that Mrs. Hudson has in the kitchen?” he wonders, voice disturbingly conversational for the time of night and topic that he is broaching.

John turns his head to stare at Sherlock in the darkness, frowning incredulously. He can’t believe he was woken up for that. “Sherlock, remember when we talked about acceptable reasons to wake me up in the middle of the night?” he asks, pinching the bridge of his nose between his thumb and index finger and trying not to yell. It’s not Sherlock’s fault that the boy doesn’t understand proper social cues, after all.

Sherlock huffs in irritation, as if he is the one who is put out, and crosses his arms as he sits up in bed, leaning against the headboard. “I love you, and I can’t wait until we can start our lives together,” he grouses, but John can tell by the soft, affectionate sound of his voice that he means the words. “Is that an acceptable enough reason to be woken up in the middle of the night?”

John barks out a laugh, his frustration vanishing almost instantly. He has no idea how Sherlock manages to do that to him. “Yeah,” he says with a grin. “Yeah, that is definitely acceptable.”

Since he is already up, he decides to reach a fumbling hand out for the pile of bed linens that Mrs. Hudson had given them the prior evening. Eventually, his probing fingers miraculously come into contact with a thin sheet and lumpy pillows in the darkened room. John pulls the cover up and over them, settling it around them to ward off the chill that has crept into the room with the
oncoming night and turning back around to spoon the boy. He smiles warmly into the back of Sherlock’s neck as they drift lazily back to sleep wrapped in each other’s arms, determined not to think about the fact that he is spending the entire night away from his wife or worrying about what he is going to tell her tomorrow morning.

For now, all he wants is to get lost in the feel of Sherlock falling asleep in his arms, dreaming about what it will be like when they get to do this every night for the rest of their lives.
John wakes up indecently early the next morning in an unfamiliar bed in central London and wants to panic; he wants to feel badly that he spent the entire night away from home, away from his wife; he wants to feel guilty that he will have to lie to her again—but he doesn’t.

He simply doesn’t care about that anymore. This is the first time he has woken up next to Sherlock since the weekend that they spent together, and he wants to savour it; the warm, languid, heady feel of them cuddled together in the centre of the bed, a tangle of limbs and blankets and body heat.

So John shoots off a text telling her that he got in late last night and had to leave for work early that morning and to not worry about him because he is already at the school. Then he leans over to wake up Sherlock. They will have to leave soon if they want to make it back to school on time; the drive is a bit long but nothing that will make them late if they leave in the next hour or so.

Sherlock is sleeping soundly next to him. The thin sheet that Mrs. Hudson gave them yesterday which he had reached for in the middle of the night is now twisted around Sherlock’s long, pale limbs, and there are soft snuffles emanating from his nose. The bed is lovely and comfortable with their combined heat and scents, and John almost hates to wake him. He knows how little sleep Sherlock gets in the first place but it really can’t be helped. As much as he wants to stay here at Baker Street with Sherlock, in this happy little bubble they have created for themselves, he knows that they can’t. So he leans over Sherlock and kisses him gently on his pliant, sleep-soft mouth.

“Sherlock,” John whispers against his lips. “Wake up, love.”

Sherlock grumbles and tries to turn away from him, burying his head between his forearms and the lumpy pillow. “Don’ wanna,” he mumbles into the mattress, gripping the sheet and trying to pull it up over himself.

John chuckles and yanks the blanket back down, looking down at his lover fondly. “We have to, darling. We both missed yesterday; it will look suspicious if we’re gone again.”

“Want to stay here,” Sherlock argues sleepily against John’s sound reasoning.

John’s chuckle turns into an outright snicker. He loves Sherlock first thing in the morning; he is so delightfully bedraggled. It’s precious. “I know you do, but I need to go back, and I’m not about to leave you here,” he tells the lump of pillow that is Sherlock’s head. “God knows what kind of trouble you’d get into.”

Sherlock’s grumbling grows louder at that but he still doesn’t emerge from his cocoon of warmth. It doesn’t bother John, though; he knows Sherlock is awake now. He can’t ever go back to sleep once he has woken up. So John crawls reluctantly out of the warm bed and begins gathering up
their clothes, padding quietly into the bathroom to wash up and put back together the first aid kit that had been torn apart in the rush to find lube last night. He walks back into the bedroom and is halfway dressed when he looks over to the bed and sees that Sherlock still hasn’t even sat up yet, although he has pulled his head out from under the blanket. John figures that is a step in the right direction.

“Come on, hurry up,” John tells him, tossing Sherlock his trousers, which he makes no effort whatsoever to catch. “I still need to swing by mine to have a quick wash and change clothes before I go in to work.”

“But John,” Sherlock whispers, and the way he says John’s name—the soft, breathy emphasis he puts on it—has John glancing up from stepping into his trousers. His eyes rake over Sherlock lying in bed, naked underneath the sheet and spreading his legs invitingly as he smiles at John and bites his lip. “Wouldn’t you rather fuck me instead?”

God help him, yes he would.

Fuck it, John thinks, dropping his jeans back around his feet and stepping out of them so fast that he almost trips on the legs as he scurries back towards the bed. He can wear the same thing he had on yesterday. No one at work saw him, and it will save them almost half an hour.

And John knows exactly what Sherlock is capable of doing in half an hour.

* * *

They manage to make it to the school on time—barely—John shuffling into his first lesson at the same time as his students, winded and grinning like a loon. He somehow manages to keep his mind on his lessons and not his brilliant, incorrigible boyfriend, and he makes it through the day with minimal trouble.

When John gets home that evening, he says a quick hello to Mary before trying to head off to the bedroom for a much needed shower and change of clothes, but she takes one look at him and stops him in his tracks.

“John, my God,” she says worryingly. “What’s happened to you?”

He frowns at her, confused for a moment, before his eyes follow the line of her gaze to the side of his face where the cuts on his temple are, and he suddenly remembers. “Oh! It’s nothing serious,” he assures her with a small shake of his head, looking away from her. “I, er…I got—”

Mary interrupts him, though, her voice hard. “I swear, if you tell me that you got mugged again…” she trails off crossly, and John lets her.

He pauses for a moment and stares at her blankly. And then, “Why can’t I say that I got mugged again?” he asks, out of curiosity.

“Because if you say that you got mugged again, that will be the second time in a week, and, unless you’ve gone out looking for muggers, I’d say that that is a pretty far stretch, wouldn’t you?” she explains. He can tell by her voice that she is angry. Well and truly angry. It is the tone she uses when she is done playing games, when she is done dancing around an issue that they both know is there.

John knows what she is going to say before she says it. So he sits down heavily in his chair in the sitting room because he doesn’t know if he has the energy for this right now. She stands in front of him and stares at him with blank, blue eyes that hold none of the vibrancy and life and beauty that
“John, what have you been doing?” Mary demands, hands fluttering at her sides as if she isn’t quite sure what she wants to do with them. “You’re hardly ever home after work, you spend most of the daytime hours on the weekends out, you come home smelling like cigarettes and rush up to take a shower straight away, and now this.” She makes a gesture at John’s face. At the cuts which she knows that he didn’t get from a mugger and that he didn’t get from hanging out with Mike at a pub or grading papers at his friend’s house. “You can’t sit there and tell me that you’ve been spending all this time with Mike,” she says, voicing his exact thoughts. “I’m not stupid, you know.”

She is looking at him expectantly, waiting for an answer from him, but John doesn’t know what to tell her. So he just sits in his chair and stares at her, and he doesn’t say anything.

What is there to say, after all?

That he’s finally found something good in his life, after all these years, after all the heartache he’s endured? That he’s finally found something worth living for? That’s he’s found everything he’s ever needed, ever wanted, and it just so happens to be a sixteen year old boy who is his student, who has a genius level IQ, and talks to a human skull, and has an alcoholic, abusive father? That plain, safe old John Watson, in his silly little cardigans and frumpy-looking jumpers, has found something that he would give up every respectable, right thing in his life for?

“You didn’t come home after I fell asleep last night, did you?” she asks into the silence quietly, and John is suddenly slightly ashamed and somewhat disgusted with himself over that point, so he still doesn’t answer her.

His silence is answer enough, though.

Mary bites her lips to keep them from trembling, and he can see her eyes fill with tears even from where he is sitting, across the room. “Why are you doing this, John?” she wants to know, and her voice cracks harshly, making him wince. He always hated it when she cried. “To teach me a lesson? To hurt me, to show me how much I hurt you? Well you’ve proved your point, so you can just stop it now. Please, just stop,” she begs, and the first of her tears fall, trailing light traces of mascara down her face.

He thinks it’s strange that she is in his place for once, and it feels wrong—she shouldn’t be the one begging him not to hurt her anymore, he shouldn’t be the one who is coming back home to her after leaving a lover’s arms. This shouldn’t be him. But it is.

Words stick in his throat. So many words, a jumble of thoughts and pain and sorrow and regret. He tries to speak, to say something to her—anything—but he is afraid of only hurting her more, so he stays silent.

“I never did this, you know,” Mary tells him when it is obvious that he isn’t going to say anything to her. “I was never so obvious about it; I never rubbed your face in it. I at least had the courtesy to come home at night, to not lie so openly, so constantly. And I had the balls to admit to it when I was caught. Unlike you.”

She’s angry now, and trying to be hurtful. He lets her because he feels that she deserves at least this much for her suffering, for what he’s doing to her. Mary’s eyes are red and puffy, and her cheeks are flushed and blotchy. Her nose is rosy and shiny from holding back her tears but she won’t cry in front of him, John knows this. She always hated to let him see her cry.

“If you’re going to fuck around, at least be a Goddamn man about it, John,” Mary spits out before
she can’t take it anymore and her voice cracks. A sob escapes her throat before she manages to turn around and run from the room, bringing a hand up to her mouth to hold in the choked sounds of her cries.

John just sits quietly in his chair and watches her leave.

*

The next day, Thursday, John is nervous when he goes over to Sherlock’s to meet him after school. He enters Sherlock’s room with his left hand clenched inside his pocket, fingering the old, worn box he has hidden in there.

He wonders when he should bring it out; he wonders how he should do it. Suddenly, without warning? Or should he work up to it? Bring it up casually in conversation and see how Sherlock reacts to the idea first, before throwing himself out there?

As it turns out, Sherlock doesn’t give him the chance to make a decision.

“You’re worried about something. What is it?” Sherlock asks point blank almost as soon as John walks in to his bedroom. He is sitting at his desk, undoubtedly in the middle of yet another experiment, and doesn’t even bother to get up when John walks in.

“I, er…” John doesn’t know what to say when he is finally standing in front of Sherlock, because he hadn’t really planned to be put on the spot.

Sherlock just frowns at him, though, plump lips pursing impatiently. “Come on, out with it. You have something that you want to say. I can tell.”

John steels his resolve. He can do this. Of course he can. Sherlock has already told him that he wants them to move to London together, that he wants John to stay with him after he finishes his exams and goes off to university—telling Sherlock what he plans to say right now shouldn’t be a big deal at all.

So why is his heart pounding like thunder in his chest and why are his palms sweaty and why does it feel like he can’t catch his breath?

“John?” Sherlock prompts.

John licks his lips and forges ahead. “I, er, just want you to know that I’m not going to replace the wedding ring that you threw out the window,” he says determinedly, watching as Sherlock hears his words and grows still as John speaks. “If Mary asks me to get another, I’ll tell her no. I’ll tell her that it is just pointless. But…” he trails off with a blush, then clears his throat and squares his shoulders because he was a soldier, dammit. He killed people. And he won’t be made to feel like a love-struck school boy over this. “Sherlock, there’s something I want to give you. Something that I want you to have.”

Before he can change his mind, he reaches into the pocket of his trousers and pulls out the box that has been sitting there like a lead weight ever since leaving his house earlier.

It’s not much to look at. It is a plain, battered old box, the kind one might find an older gentleman’s pocket watch in. The lid is hinged, but so rusted that the metal is almost completely black. When John opens up the box for Sherlock to see the contents inside, the bottom of the box is covered with a raised velvet lining. The lining is the same dull, dirtied brown colour as the outside of the box, which may have been maroon at one point. Underneath the lid, sitting on the raised velvet lining, are two circular, engraved metal disks speckled with dirt and grime, and
threaded through a silver ball chain.

Sherlock stares at the box for a long moment, not taking it out of John’s hands. John watches him in silence, his eyes never leaving Sherlock’s face, looking, searching for a sign, a clue, anything to show him what Sherlock is thinking.

He had told Sherlock. John had promised him that he would make it all up to him. He had said that he would give Sherlock something that would make up for all of the hurt and the pain that being with Mary—that keeping his wedding ring and the millions of other stupid things he did—had caused him.

John had promised.

“John,” Sherlock says at last, voice quiet in the stillness around them. “These are…”

“My dog tags,” John finishes for him, mostly because he wants to cover up the awkward silence that is descending thickly between them. “Yeah.”

“…Didn’t give them to Mary?” he finishes finally.

“No,” John responds truthfully but he is getting nervous now, the longer that Sherlock sits there without reacting. He licks his lips. “Why would I? They’re mine. They never belonged to her, not once, not even a little.” He is genuinely confused by the very idea of giving them to Mary.

Then why give them to me?” Sherlock asks, looking up at John for the first time since he stood in front of Sherlock and presented him with the box.

John stares at him incredulously, as if he is surprised that Sherlock even has to ask that question. “Because everything that I am is yours,” John tells him truthfully, his voice rough with assertion. “And I am this. Was,” he corrects himself, irrationally angry at the slip of this tongue. “I was this.” He’s not this anymore, and he would do well to remember that. There’s no point in living in the past.

“I am this.” Sherlock assures, standing up from his seat and pressing close to John, their bodies touching. His large hands come up to hold the box over John’s own, cupping them, both of them cradling John’s dog tags in their combined grasp. “You still are this, John. Thank you. You have no idea what this means to me. I don’t have adequate words to express…” he trails off and his fingers slip up over the box to caress the cool metal of the ball chain.

Sherlock picks the chain up lightly and makes the silver clink together with a small tinkling sound as he closes his hand around the disks. “I’ll take care of them and make sure they stay beautiful,” he promises him, bringing his closed fist to his chest and resting it there, holding the cradled dog tags against his heart.

At Sherlock’s words, John frowns and makes a noise of discontent. “They’re dirty and sandy and probably still covered in some of my blood,” he says, as if Sherlock saying that they are beautiful is the height of inaccuracies.

Sherlock leans forward the infinitesimal space to press a kiss to John’s lips. “They are part of you, and they are beautiful,” he argues gently. “Just like everything about you.”

At that, John smiles. “Even you?” he asks, pressing forwards for another kiss when Sherlock tries to pull away. “You’re the best part of me, Sherlock. The part that makes everything about me
better."

Sherlock blushes at that and looks away from him but doesn’t say anything. John takes advantage of his silence and bends forward to give him a kiss on the nose the way that he knows Sherlock secretly adores but will tell John that he hates, mainly for principle.

Just as he suspected, Sherlock crinkles his nose in mock-disgust, but his blush only deepens and John chuckles softly. Sherlock, though, can’t seem to stop worrying.

“John, are you sure you want to—” he begins but doesn’t get any farther before John interrupts him.

“Don’t,” John says with a shake of his head, not even letting Sherlock finish his sentence because he already knows what Sherlock is going to say. He is going to ask if John is sure that he wants to give Sherlock such an important part of himself, which is stupid—of course John is sure. John has never been so sure of anything in his whole life.

John will give everything he has—everything he is—to Sherlock, all of it, because he knows that Sherlock is the only person who knows what to do with it.

“I love you, and I want you to have them. They’re yours,” John whispers against Sherlock’s mouth, pressing kisses to his lips between his words, sealing them there. “They always were.”

Sherlock beams at him, and the bright burning power of it could put the sun to shame.

John’s smile answers Sherlock’s own and he reaches out to him, pulling Sherlock into a hug against his body. He’ll never understand how he can feel so utterly happy and content with his life. I can’t believe that I have this, he thinks as his arms tighten around Sherlock. All of this belongs to me. Every last bit of it.

He can’t remember a time when he’s ever felt more content.

*

John can hear them when Sherlock walks past him as he enters John’s classroom the next day. It is Friday, the day before he is to leave on his weekend trip with Mary, and John already knows that he will miss Sherlock fiercely over the long weekend. The soft, barely-there jingle of his metal dog tags rubbing together underneath Sherlock’s tight button down dress shirt don’t help matters at all. John has to stop his introduction into what they are going to be learning that day and lick his lips, trying hard not to let the heat that is bubbling in his belly rise to his face or sink to his groin. He swallows thickly, once, before clearing his throat and resuming his lecture, decidedly not looking at Sherlock for the rest of the lesson.

Halfway through class John looks to the back of the room and sees Sherlock sitting at his table with his long fingers resting just inside the open collar of his shirt, playing along the tiny balls of the metal chain sitting delicately against his pale neck.

John has to sit at his desk so that his raging erection isn’t visible.

By the time class is done, John can barely think straight and he only has enough presence of mind to ask Sherlock rather politely if he can stay after class to discuss his last assignment while the rest of the students file out one by one, ignoring them for the most part.

As soon as they are alone, though, John is on him, leaving the safety of the cover of his desk and stalking across the room. He intercepts Sherlock at the first row of student tables and kisses him
hungrily, grabbing him roughly and sending them stumbling slightly into the desks beside them.

“You’re such a fucking tease, you know that?” John asks him, biting at Sherlock’s plump bottom lip and making him inhale sharply. John’s hands move down immediately to the front of Sherlock’s trousers, making quick work of his belt, his movements sharp and jerky. Beneath the material of Sherlock’s clothes John can feel that the teen is already hardening. His own cock finishes filling out in interest. “I know you did it on purpose. You wanted me to know you were wearing them.”

John gets Sherlock’s belt undone and begins working on his flies, kissing him messily, forcing Sherlock’s mouth open so that he can get deeper. He pulls the zipper of Sherlock’s trousers down and his fingers automatically dive underneath Sherlock’s clothing, reveling in the warmth, the feel of soft, naked skin against his gun-calloused hands. Sherlock moans against his mouth.

“Is this what you were hoping for? Is this what you wanted? Hmm?” John asks him, licking at his lips.

“Yes,” Sherlock gasps as one of his hands comes around to stroke his teacher through the front of the man’s trousers. “Yesss.”

John slides his hands back around behind Sherlock and his fingers dip down beneath the waistband of Sherlock’s jeans, between his arse cheeks, trying to go ever lower.

"John, I—" Sherlock begins, but John cuts him off with a swift kiss. He doesn’t want to talk right now; he knows why they shouldn’t be doing this, he knows how stupid and dangerous and reckless this is.

He doesn’t care.

John pushes Sherlock’s trousers and pants down, hearing them fall to the floor with a muted thump that is intently ignored as his fingers slide along the crack of Sherlock’s arse, intent on their goal. He knows he won’t be able to fuck the boy, not here, not without proper preparation. But just to feel that tight little pucker of skin, to rub at it and push into it slightly with just the tip of his finger, to feel that heat even for just a split second…..The desire is driving him crazy.

"John, let me—" Sherlock begins to say, but John’s fingers are now tracing lower than they have been, searching eagerly. Before Sherlock can even finish his sentence, John finds what he is looking for: Sherlock’s tight arsehole stretched around something warm and hard and what the fuck?

John’s hand instantly stills and he pulls back to stare at Sherlock, who is looking at him in embarrassment, face flaming. “It’s a plug,” he explains, no longer able to hold John’s gaze, letting his eyes drift downwards to slip away from John’s incredulous stare. “Just a small one. I wore it so that when you met me after school, I would be open and ready for you.”

"You’ve…been wearing it all day?” John asks, breathless, because he can think of nothing else to say. He looks at Sherlock and licks his lips.

Sherlock nods back in response, cheeks flaming ever redder and John can’t help it; he has never had a chance against Sherlock Holmes.

"Oh bloody fucking hell.”

He groans deeply and kisses Sherlock again, frantic now. The thought of Sherlock sitting in class all day long with a plug up his arse, waiting for John to fuck him, is too much. It will kill him, he’s
"God, Sherlock, what in the world are you doing to me?" he asks, not for the first time and certainly not for the last. Sherlock whines against his mouth and John knows exactly what he wants, so he obliges him, gives Sherlock exactly what he needs. “I can’t meet you later,” John tells him whenever his lips break away from Sherlock’s for long enough to get words out. “Gonna take you right now.”

He kisses Sherlock, their tongues tangling with each other’s and making a mess of their lips and teeth. There is a sense of urgency between them—being in the school, in his classroom—that has them both desperately pawing at each other’s clothing and bodies. He doesn’t bother undressing Sherlock anymore, knowing that they don’t have the luxury for that at the moment, but he lets Sherlock’s unsteady fingers work at the flies of his trousers and expose his cock to the cool air of the room, pulling him out.

Sherlock’s hands work over him swiftly, making his prick swell to fullness between them. As Sherlock wanks him, John’s mouth travels down his lover’s neck, nipping and biting as it moves lower, towards Sherlock’s collar. He can hear his dog tags rattling beneath Sherlock’s shirt, he can feel them pressed between them every time they surge against one another, and he has to see them. He has to see them lying against Sherlock’s pale skin, he has to press his mouth to them.

John gets Sherlock’s top two buttons undone with shaking hands and pulls the collar of his shirt wide, baring his pale, bony sternum. His dog tags move up and down on Sherlock’s heaving chest and when John presses his lips against them, they are body-warm and he can smell Sherlock around them. His cock leaks in Sherlock’s hands as Sherlock strokes him jerkily, and he can’t stand it a moment longer—he wants the boy now.

John is rough when he twirls Sherlock around, shoving the top half of his body down against the table that is now in front of him. A soft sound of surprise leaves Sherlock’s mouth, but he doesn’t complain, doesn’t struggle as John presses one hand to the back of his shoulders, holding him down. He simply pants against the flat surface of the table, the side of his face pressed to the worktop and his hands braced on either side of his head, arse exposed for John to see.

With Sherlock bent over like this, John can see the flared end of the plug sticking out of him. The skin around it looks tight where the base is pressed to it, and it’s not even the rim of his entrance. John wonders if he is sore from wearing it all day long. He slips his fingers between the plug and Sherlock’s skin and lets them trace over the sensitive outline of Sherlock’s hole.

Sherlock squirms underneath his hands and makes impossibly arousing noises against the flat surface of the table.

“Jesus,” John breathes, his cock aching as it hangs stiffly outside of his trousers, framed all around by the clothes he is still wearing.

John pulls the plug out slowly and Sherlock gasps at the sensation, and John feels like he could come right then. The toy is indeed small, but it is still slick and shiny with lube. John works it in and out of Sherlock’s body slowly, letting his hole stretch out to the widest part of the plug comfortably over and over again, dilating his entrance in preparation. He takes his time, twisting the toy and tilting it in every angle imaginable. John is sure to press the tip of it up against Sherlock’s prostate every once in a while, rubbing across the over-stimulated bundle of nerves maddeningly and making Sherlock keen and cry out, struggling against his teacher’s hold.

When John has had his fill of the sounds that Sherlock is making and the way that Sherlock’s body trembles underneath his hands, he pushes the plug in deep one last time before slowly, slowly,
dragging it back out. His grip on the base of it is slippery from the copious amounts of lubricant that Sherlock had coated it with when he had put it inside of himself earlier in the day, and his fingers tighten around the body-warm toy tightly.

Below him, Sherlock whimpers pitifully when John removes the plug, his body shaking. John looks down to see him hide his face in embarrassment at the sound he produced, turning it into the table.

“What’s the matter, love?” John asks him quietly, bending low, draping himself over Sherlock’s back to lick at the boy’s neck just below his hairline.

Sherlock trembles under his tongue. “I…I feel empty,” he moans, breath fogging on the dark wood surface that his face is pressed into. “I don’t like it.”

John can only imagine what it would feel like to be plugged all day long, so full, and then have it taken away. He takes pity on the poor boy and pushes the plug back in slightly. “Don’t worry, darling. I’ll fill you up again soon.” He punctuates his promise with a kiss to any bare piece of skin that he can get his mouth on as he pulls the toy out again slowly.

The plug finally pops out of Sherlock’s body with a wet squelch, and John carefully sets it aside on one of the unused tables within his reach. His fingers and the base of the toy leave wet, slimy smudges across the smooth flat surfaces of the wood, but that is the last thing on his mind. He hardly pays any attention to the mess as he turns back to Sherlock and offers the boy his other, clean hand. He lets his sticky, lubed one take its place on the back of Sherlock’s neck to keep him bent over the table.

He presses his clean fingers against Sherlock’s mouth until the brunet opens up and wraps his tongue around them without even needing to be prompted to take them in, licking and sucking on them. "Get them nice and wet, love. Good boy,” John praises him, sighing in pleasure at the feel of Sherlock working over his fingers eagerly. “More, I don't want to hurt you. That's it, lovely.”

When John feels that they are wet enough, he immediately withdraws them from Sherlock’s mouth and wastes no time in trailing them across Sherlock’s body, down to his exposed arse. John presses two fingers immediately inside of Sherlock, and the dilated hole takes them with no resistance. Sherlock bucks suddenly against the table, cursing at the sudden fullness, and John chuckles darkly at him.

“Isn’t this what you wanted?” John asks him lowly, voice gone husky with arousal. “No waiting? Just me, shoving in? Isn’t that why you decided to be a little cock-slut today?”

“Y-yes.”

John pulls his fingers out slightly, leaving the very tips in before pressing back inside again, shoving in deep. “God, you’re loose. So wet. It’s perfect. You’re such a good boy, so ready and open for me.”

He presses a third finger carefully into Sherlock’s stretched hole, knowing Sherlock probably isn’t ready but not caring overly at the moment. Sherlock, however, simply moans and pushes back into him, wanting more, urging John deeper. John can’t help but chuckle. Always so impatient, his little Sherlock. He shoves his fingers in deeper, probing, stretching, and Sherlock hisses and arches at the sudden sting of pain, but doesn’t try to pull away. John pumps his fingers in and out of the boy’s open arse, scissoring them wide and drawing the preparation out for a moment longer, but he knows that it isn’t really necessary; Sherlock is more than ready to be taken.
John pulls his hand out against a sound of protestation from Sherlock, still face-down and practically boneless on the table below him. He looks down at the hand that has just been inside his lover, gauging the amount of residual lubrication that he sees leftover from the toy. He spits into his hand, a rather disgusting amount that rewets the lube. Sherlock is stretched and still slightly wet with lube from the toy, and John can feel how pliable the muscle under his fingers is. He has never been one to enjoy the feel of nothing but spit slicking his cock, or think that it is a proper lubricant, but with the mixture of Sherlock’s open and wet hole, he knows that they can do this as long as he is careful with Sherlock.

He adds a little more spit to his palm for good measure with a grimace.

But when he enters Sherlock, it is with minimal resistance and two gasps of pleasure. Sherlock is still tight but the hurried preparation certainly helped. John spares a moment to wonder if he can ever fuck Sherlock long and hard enough that he will loosen up at all, and then he has to still his movements and think of something else before he comes straight away at that thought.

“John,” Sherlock pants against the worktop, squirming restlessly. “Please, God, please.”

John can’t resist. He pulls his hips back suddenly and then snaps them forward swiftly, hard, just once. Sherlock gasps underneath him, moaning in surprise and pleasure. John’s hands move and grip Sherlock’s waist to gain some leverage and he sets up a steady pace, thrusting into Sherlock’s pliant body as the teen scrabbles to get a hold of the table, to grab onto something to ground him. But John’s thrusts rock him too roughly against the desk and all Sherlock can do is cling to the edge of it desperately, moaning as every brush of John’s cock slides over his prostate.

“Touch me, John,” Sherlock begs him, and one of John’s hands drifts down to find Sherlock’s cock pressed up against the side of the worktop, painfully hard, leaking and smearing precome against the table.

When John wraps his hand around Sherlock’s prick, the boy cries out and bucks wildly, too sensitive already. John has to hold him down harder with the hand that he has kept on the back of Sherlock’s neck, keeping him in place. He fucks Sherlock and lets the momentum of his thrusts slide the boy’s cock through the loose grip of his hand, stroking Sherlock as he pumps into him.

As John looks down at him, Sherlock gives up trying to find a grip on the table to steady himself against. Instead, he drags one of his hands over to his own body, slipping it underneath his chest as John shoves him across the flat surface of the wood. The movement intrigues John because he can see that Sherlock is trying to get his hand inside his own shirt, and John suddenly knows exactly what it is that Sherlock is doing.

John smiles as he fucks him and releases his hold on the back of Sherlock’s neck.

He reaches forward, his hand searching until he finds what he is looking for—Sherlock’s fingers, clenched around John’s dog tags and pressed to his chest in a fist.

John wraps his own hand around Sherlock’s, his grip cradling Sherlock’s as he holds tight to the chain around his neck, pulling it taut against his own skin. The tiny balls dig deeply into the delicate, pale flesh of Sherlock’s neck and John gives it a gentle tug, watching in wonder as the chain digs deeper into Sherlock’s skin and he winces.

“So beautiful, baby,” John whispers into his neck, lips pressed against the abused skin. “Mine. You’re mine. Say it. Say it for me.”

Sherlock groans, the fingers of his unoccupied hand wrapping around the edges of the table and his
face pressing into the unyielding wooden top. He clenches around John’s cock and rolls his hips to meet John’s thrusts. “Yours, John.”

“Yes,” John growls, and then he is coming deep inside of Sherlock, thrusting one last time as his hand slides over Sherlock’s cock and he takes the boy with him. John feels Sherlock release against his fingers, coating them in warm wetness.

They lie there on the shoddy desk for a moment, trying to catch their breath, with Sherlock pressed uncomfortably beneath John. As soon as he has the strength, John lifts himself off of Sherlock, pulling out of his arse slowly and looking down at the mess he has made of his boy. Sherlock tries to stand as well, as soon as he feels John move off of him, but John’s hand resumes its previous position, pressing down against the back of Sherlock’s neck and keeping him pinned to the table while John inspects Sherlock’s used arse.

The muscle is dilated and loose, red and inflamed from the friction. It shines wetly in the light of the classroom from lube and John’s come, a string of which has dribbled out and is slowly making its way down the boy’s perineum, slipping down his pale, trembling thigh as John watches it, transfixed.

“Oh fuck,” John groans, letting his hands glide over the smooth globes of Sherlock’s bottom, pushing the fleshy mounds apart so that he can have a clear view of the boy’s arse. “I wish you could see what I’ve done to your tight little hole, Sherlock. That’s the hottest thing I’ve ever seen. Fuck, but you’re a filthy mess.” He dips his finger into Sherlock’s come-filled hole and it sinks into the muscle easily, Sherlock’s loose arse sucking him in.

He hums thoughtfully for a moment before turning to the table beside them, where he had placed Sherlock’s plug earlier. He keeps one hand on Sherlock’s shoulders, still pressing him down to the desk, as he gently slides the plug back into the boy’s abused, reddened entrance, scraping up some of the come that has dribbled out of him along the way.

Beneath his hand, Sherlock tenses and then tries to lift himself up, but John only presses down harder. “What are you doing?” Sherlock asks him, trying to turn his head to face John. With John pinning him down against the desk, though, he can’t look over his shoulder far enough.

“Putting it back in,” John answers him easily. “Filling you back up. You said you didn’t want to be empty. And now you’re even more full. Don’t take it out until tonight, before you go to bed. Text me when you do.” The plug slides all the way inside, meeting absolutely no resistance, its way eased by John’s come. Sherlock moans as it settles into place inside of him.

When the flared base hits Sherlock’s arse cheeks, John finally lets him up, twisting him around and pulling him into a hug, kissing him sloppily. As their mouths work over each other’s, John’s hands slide up to finger the small circular disks pressing into their chests between them.

He rests his forehead against Sherlock’s, the dark fringe sticking to the sweaty skin between them. Their breaths meet between parted mouths, ragged from orgasm and heavy with pleasure. John swallows thickly and licks his lips, tasting Sherlock on his skin. They are still so close to one another that the tip of his tongue brushes Sherlock’s lush mouth, just barely. He has to take a moment to remind himself why he made the choice to stay married, why he didn’t just say “fuck it” and leave Mary the instant he knew he wanted to spend the rest of his life with Sherlock. He has to remind himself that it is the smartest, safest decision for them right now. But he’ll be damned if it isn’t the hardest, too. Especially when Sherlock insists on tormenting him like this. “You’re the pulse that I’ve always needed, Sherlock,” he whispers into the finite space between them, letting his lips move against Sherlock’s.
And as soon as the words are out of his mouth, he knows he’s never said anything more true in his life.

*

Mike asks to meet up with him that day after school, before John leaves for the weekend with Mary. John agrees because he still tries to stay away from spending Fridays and Saturdays with Sherlock as much as he can, and he hadn’t been lying when he told Sherlock that he wasn’t going to see him later that day when they were in John’s classroom together. He can never seem to tear himself away from the teen at a decent enough hour and he has to be up early to drive to the countryside tomorrow morning, so he figures a quick pint with Mike will be a good excuse to get out of the house for a bit and keep him from the temptation of going to see Sherlock.

Besides, he knows he’ll have to talk to Mike about the situation some time. He can’t keep dodging his friend’s texts forever.

When John gets to their local, Mike is already there. A half-empty pint is in his hand and John cautiously walks up to him, taking a seat next to him. He orders one of whatever Mike is drinking and downs it almost instantly.

“I know you didn’t break it off,” Mike says to him, not looking at him. “I’m not stupid, you know.”

“Didn’t say you were,” John replies casually.

Mike turns and looks at him for the first time, and John can tell when his friend’s eyes land on the cuts and scrapes on the side of his face. Mike stares at them for a long moment in silence, his lips thinning into an angry line the longer he stares at John. John knows that Mike can tell how those cuts probably came about. The two of them may be older now, but they both got into plenty of rash fist-fights over lovers when they were younger (and stupid).

Mike’s voice suddenly cuts through John’s thoughts, harsh and angry and full of every single judgment that John doesn’t want to hear from his friend. “What the fuck are you doing, John?”

John doesn’t have an answer for him. He knows he doesn’t. He answers him the best he can, though. “I wish I knew, Mike.”

Mike sighs heavily, running a chubby, worn hand over his tired, lined face. “This will pass, you know,” he says, looking at his friend. John can see that Mike really wants to believe his words, for John’s sake. “These feelings that you have for this boy…they’ll go away, eventually. And then you can go back to your wife, and your life, and hopefully you haven’t fucked everything up so badly that you won’t have anything left when this is over.”

John just smiles at him, however, shaking his head. He says gently, “No, Mike. They won’t pass.”

He thinks about how he feels about Sherlock, and how he doesn’t have adequate words to describe to Mike the way Sherlock has turned his life around, the way Sherlock has made everything better. Sherlock has come in like a force of nature and saved John. John knows that nothing like what he feels for Sherlock could ever be so trivial that it will just “pass away” like leaves in a wind. “I haven’t ever felt this way about anyone,” he tells Mike, looking the man in the face. “God, not even Mary. I’ve never felt about Mary the way that I feel about Sherlock. I won’t ever feel this way about anyone else. I…I love him.”
Mike barks out an incredulous laughter, making John jump slightly in surprise. Mike’s face is full of the kind of disgusted judgment he has always feared he’d see on his friend, the kind he hoped he’d never have directed at him. “Christ, John! Would you fucking listen to yourself! He’s a kid! A kid! You’re old enough to be his fucking father! You have no idea what you’re saying anymore.”

John sits there and takes abuse from Mike, hiding behind the warm buzz of beer he is drowning himself in because he knows the man is right. He knows what he is doing is wrong, and he doesn’t have a leg to stand on. Besides, he doesn’t want to lose Mike’s friendship over this. He doesn’t want to lose every single thing he has in his life over Sherlock.

Mike takes a long draught of his pint as well, emptying it and staring down into the frothy dregs of his glass. “Come on. Where do you see this going, really, mate?” he asks John, looking up at him with a dark scowl. “He’s almost twenty years younger than you. Don’t you worry that he’s going to get tired of you? That he’s going to want someone younger eventually, closer to his own age, with interests similar to his own? Don’t you worry that it will turn out that he’s too immature for you? That’s a big age difference, mate. It can cause a lot of problems. What happens when you can’t give him what he needs in bed anymore? You think he’s going to be okay with that? No, he won’t,” Mike answers himself with a shake of his head. “You’ll end up in the same way as you’ve ended up with Mary. It’s inevitable, John. I’m sorry, but it is.”

John just sits there, speechless. Mike seems to always have a way of bringing up John’s most secret fears and worries about Sherlock. First it was whether or not Sherlock was going to want to keep an old man like John around after graduation—and that question had thankfully been cleared up. But now there is this issue that has secretly been nibbling away at the back of John’s mind. He already knows that he isn’t able to keep up with Sherlock sexually—the Viagra has proved its usefulness in that respect already. But sex is only a portion of the relationship. John’s twenty year age difference is bound to have an effect on their interests sometime later on down the road, no matter what Sherlock says to reassure him about it now. Once again the horrible thought comes unbidden to John’s mind that Sherlock will end up leaving him behind, because John can’t keep up with all the different, ever-changing aspects of Sherlock’s personality.

John fiddles with a cheap paper coaster and doesn’t say anything.

“But I suppose nothing I can say can change your mind, can it?” Mike asks him bitterly.

John still decides to stay diplomatically silent.

“And you’re sure that you can’t wait for even a few more fucking months, John? After he’s finished his exams and this won’t be such a big deal anymore?”

John thinks about that for a second, thinks about the reasoning behind it, solid and legitimate. Then he thinks about giving Sherlock up until the end of the school year, what seems like a lifetime away, and the answer is blazingly clear, without a doubt.

No, he can’t wait. Everything about Sherlock makes every piece of sense that John has fly straight out the window. Reasonably, John should know that if it is meant to be, a few months or even a year isn’t anything; he should know that if Sherlock really loves him, he’ll wait for John.

Yet the thought of leaving Sherlock for any amount of time is gut-wrenching, sickening, unthinkable. Now that John has had him, he knows he’ll never be able to let Sherlock go, not even for a little while. Anything could happen in a few months, anyone could come along and snatch Sherlock up, anything could pull Sherlock farther away from him.
No, he can’t let that happen. He can’t possibly wait a few months, let alone a year. A year without Sherlock is a lifetime, and he’s already suffered through one of those without the boy. He won’t sit idly through another.

Mike sighs into his pint glass, understanding John’s silence and shaking his head. “It’s your choice, John. You’re my friend, and you’ll always be my friend. You know that. Just,” he frowns down at the frosty residue of his lager, “just don’t expect me to help you out when everything goes tits up. Yeah?”

John stares at him, because he can’t believe that Mike cares about him enough to stick with him, even through something as awful as this. John doesn’t deserve a friend like him.

“Yeah, Mike,” he says. “Thanks. That…means a lot, you know.”

Mike turns to look at him, and John is half afraid of seeing that look of disgust again, that look of judgment, but instead there is just a look of pity, of disappointment that is almost just as bad. “I just hope things don’t go pear shaped for you,” Mike tells him with a sad sigh.

John can’t help but hope the exact the same thing.
The ride up to meet Mary’s family in the country on Saturday morning is just as uncomfortable as John thought it would be. He and Mary don’t speak to each other for the whole trip, and John’s mobile goes off so often with incoming text messages that he has to turn it onto vibrate. The low buzz of it can still be heard deep in his trouser pocket, however. Whenever he gets the chance, he checks his messages (each one always from Sherlock) and responds to as many as he can. Mary’s sharp, narrowed eyes are constantly on him, though, so after a while he just simply gives up.

When they get to the inn that her family rented out, Mary automatically gets swept up by her sister and cousins, leaving John to unpack the car and wander about alone. He finds the town’s pub and sets up shop for a couple of hours with a few glasses of scotch before she finds him for lunch, dragging him along. His phone buzzes throughout the meal, and she glares at him so murderously that he decides to set the tone to silent and ignore it for the time being.

It isn’t until later in the afternoon—while Mary’s brothers and uncles are playing a bit of football and he’s sitting outside in the cool air watching them—that his mobile begins to light up as it goes off where it is laying face up on the table. He doesn’t pay it much mind at first, continuing his conversation with Mary’s father. After the third time it lights up on the table between them, Mr. Morstan frowns and says, “You going to answer that, son?”

John sighs and excuses himself. He turns away from his father-in-law slightly so that he doesn’t get a glare on his screen and opens up his text app. It is a picture message that has automatically downloaded over the inn’s WiFi network, so it is waiting for him as soon as he opens his text messages.

A picture of a very naked Sherlock.

John quickly shuts off the screen of his phone, face turning a magnificent shade of red. Mary’s father looks over at him with some concern before asking, “All right, John?”

“Yeah,” John chokes out, struggling up from his seat at the patio table next to Mr. Morstan. “I just have…I, er…need to answer this,” he stammers as he puts some distance between himself and the rest of Mary’s family, all of them milling about outside happily.

John opens the rest of the messages and sees that they are all similar, all very lewd pictures of Sherlock. He closes his eyes and sighs, his cock twitching in his trousers. John knows he should get up to his room before he embarrasses himself, and he makes the decision to head back to the inn just as his mobile lights up in his hand. He looks down to see Sherlock’s name on the ID screen.
“You shouldn’t be calling me,” John says when he answers, looking around him to make sure no one is close enough to hear him.

“I miss you,” Sherlock tells him across the line. His breath is shaky and low, and John suddenly has a very good idea of what he is doing on the other end of the phone.

His cock fills out a little more inside his trousers and he quickens his pace towards the inn.

“You know I’m busy,” John’s tone is surprisingly steady and diplomatic for the way he is feeling inside, edgy and unnerved.

“Did you get my pictures?” Sherlock asks him, ignoring John’s statement.

Just then, Mary’s aunt passes by him, helping her grandmother down the steps of the inn. John licks his lips and smiles tightly at the women, waiting for them to exit before he goes inside. “Yes, I received them,” he says flatly over the phone.

“I’m so hard right now, John,” Sherlock moans in his ear as John squeezes by people, not getting too close to anyone as he tries to make it towards the stairs of the inn. “I’m touching myself and thinking about you. Are you thinking about me while you’re there? With Mary and all of her family? Are you thinking of me right now?”

He finally reaches the stairs and bolts up them, taking them two at a time. “Yeah,” he breathes into the phone, voice low and broken. “Yeah, I am,” and he can practically hear Sherlock’s smirk over the line as the boy moans into his ear.

He rushes into his hotel room, intent on having a quick wank, but he stops short when he opens the door and sees Mary already in the room, freshening up by the dressing table. He quickly drops the hand holding his mobile down to his side and clears his throat, licking his lips nervously. “Oh, Mary. What…er, what are you doing up here? Thought you’d be down with your mum and sister.”

She turns to give him a confused look before continuing to fix her short fringe in the mirror. “Just came up to use the loo,” she tells her reflection.

“Yeah,” John says distractedly as he edges his way to the bathroom. “Yeah, me too.” And then he slips into the toilet area before she can say anything else to him, wincing as he closes and locks the door. He moves to sit on the closed lid of the toilet, bringing his mobile back up to his ear. “Jesus, Sherlock, what are you thinking? I’m with Mary’s family,” John hisses through his teeth.

“I don’t care. I’d let you fuck me in front of all of them, let you suck me off.”

John listens to Sherlock’s voice over the line as he tears at his belt and pulls open his trousers, jerking his stiffening prick out of his pants and fisting himself to Sherlock’s words, unable to help himself.

“You’d like that, wouldn’t you? You’d like taking me in front of them, fucking me, showing everyone how crazy I make you, what I do to you? Do you want that?” Sherlock asks, and John has to bite back a moan, his cock swelling to full arousal in his fist as he pulls at it. His eyes slide shut and his head drops back against the wall of the bathroom. “Do you want to fuck me in front of your wife? I’d suck your cock and show her how much I love it. How much I love your cock in my mouth and the taste of your come on my tongue. Will you let me have it when you come home? When you come back to me? Please. Please give it to me, I want it so bad, I miss it.”
John bites his lip to keep from groaning out loud. “Jesus fuck, Sherlock. You’re going to make me come,” he says, his heavy cock leaking in his grip as he works his fingers over himself, squeezing, stroking.

“Yes. Yes, do it for me, right there, with your wife in the next room. Come saying my name, I want her to hear you.”

John’s breath catches in his throat. “Oh fuck, Sherlock, fuck fuck fuck—” His hand works over his stiff prick furiously, gripping tightly and twisting at the end, smearing his palm with precome.

“John,” Sherlock moans on the other end of the line, voice breathy and soft and so perfect, so fucking perfect.

“She—shit!” he breathes quietly as his orgasm shoots through him. He bites back the sound, pressing his lips together, but he knows some of the noise has slipped out. His hand stutters on his cock, slick and sensitive now, covered in his come. He can’t help running his fingers down the still-hard shaft. “Oh, fucking shit. Sherlock,” he ends up whispering, shivering at the sensations his hand is still wringing from his body.

“John?” he suddenly hears Mary’s voice ask from just on the other side of the bathroom door. “John, are you all right in there? You’re making strange noises.”

“Fuck,” he whispers softly into his mobile as he jumps slightly on the lid of the toilet, looking quickly at the door to make sure it is locked. He relaxes when he sees that he did, indeed, turn the latch but Sherlock’s words don’t leave him that way for long.

“Is she there, John? Right outside the door while you’re sitting on the other side of it, filthy, with your hand covered in your own come? Covered in the mess that you made for me? Not for her. She doesn’t make you come like that, does she?” he asks, and John can tell that Sherlock is still wanking himself. He can hear it in Sherlock’s voice, in the soft noises coming over the line.

“No,” John whispers in response. “Only you.”

“John?” Mary asks again from the other side of the door, voice sounding decidedly more annoyed now. “Are you talking to someone?”

“I’m so close,” Sherlock tells him on a whimper. “Please, make me come. I want it so bad. I want to hear you.”

Fuck, John thinks. He can’t talk to Sherlock with Mary so close to the door, she will definitely be able to hear him.

And then he realises that he just doesn’t give a damn anymore. Not after all this time.

So he reaches over and turns the tap of the sink on full and falls back onto the closed lid of the toilet, come-slick hand still wanking himself at a leisurely pace now, slowly. He imagines that it is Sherlock touching him after he’s come, just the way the boy likes to.

“Okay, baby,” he whispers into the phone, voice low and soft and husky. “I want you to come for me. Fuck yourself on your fingers and pretend that it’s me, opening you up, getting you ready for my hard cock.”

“Yes, John,” Sherlock moans over the line. “Yes.”

John bites back a groan at the sound of Sherlock’s voice over his speaker. It should be illegal, how
wanton he sounds. “God, Sherlock, you drive me crazy. You beautiful monster. What are you doing to me?” John asks him for what seems to be the hundredth time since meeting the boy. Here he is at his wife’s family reunion, wanking to his teenage boyfriend’s voice over the phone while Mary stands on the other side of a closed door.

“John,” Sherlock pants on the other end of the line, and John can only imagine what Sherlock is doing to himself. He wishes like hell he could see. “John.”

“Are you fucking yourself, Sherlock? Imagining it’s me?” he asks, still stroking himself slowly. His cock is thick and wet in his hands, soft now, but the slow burn of arousal is simmering deep in his belly, kept burning by the delicious sounds of his lover over the phone. “Shove your fingers in deep, the way I would bury my cock in you, in that hot little hole,” he tells Sherlock on a soft whisper, hoping the noise of the tap running will drown out the sound of his voice.

“Oh, fuck!” Sherlock moans over the line.

“John, what the hell are you doing in there?” Mary shouts on the other side of the door.

“Come on, sweetheart,” John coaxes Sherlock softly, giving the bathroom door an anxious look, lowering his voice more. “Come for me. I want to hear you.”

“John!” Sherlock cries.

“John!” Mary yells.

John ignores her. “God, you’re so close, I can hear it in your voice,” he tells Sherlock. “You sound wrecked. If I were there with you I’d be fucking you so hard, you wouldn’t even be able to think. I would split you open. I would wreck that pretty little hole of yours.”

“I’m—I’m coming!”

“John, open this fucking door this instant!”

Over the other end of the line, John can hear Sherlock’s deep, panting breaths, ragged and uneven, and he knows that the boy is done; he doesn’t have to speak to him anymore. So he drops his mobile to his side and turns to the door, slumping against the back of the toilet, frustrated—and not just with his wife. “Jesus, Mary!” he shouts out through the door. “Can’t I have one fucking second on my own?”

“You’re talking to someone in there!” Mary accuses him, quite rightly, but John will be damned if he is going to give in that easily.

“No, I’m not,” he shouts out, letting his frustration tinge his voice. “You sound mental—can I not even use the fucking loo without you chewing my head off?” he asks her, and after that there is blessed silence from the other side of the door. In the next moment, John can see the shadow of her feet move away from underneath the space between the floor and the bottom of the door.

He isn’t stupid enough to think that she has left the room completely, though, so when he brings his mobile back to his ear he keeps the tap on and he still whispers.

“I have to go, Sherlock. Don’t ring me again. I’ll see you when I get back in town.”

“John, wait!” Sherlock begins over the line, but John is so frustrated at him—at the situation Sherlock put him in, at himself for falling for it, at Mary for not leaving bloody well enough alone—so he rings off before Sherlock can say anything else and he turns his mobile off for good
He stands up and walks to the sink, washing his hands and drying them off before giving himself a cursory wipe down and then tucking himself away. John takes a moment to stare at himself in the mirror above the sink, taking deep breaths and steeling himself for the row he knows is coming after this. John knows he can’t hide in the loo forever, though, so he squats his shoulders and opens the door, stepping out into the room to find Mary sitting on the edge of the bed facing the bathroom door, waiting for him.

“Someone has been texting and ringing you all day long,” she says without preamble, arms crossed over her chest. “Who is it? Who have you been talking to?”

“What do you care?” he asks her dismissively, walking across the room to his suitcase, pretending to look for something just so that he doesn’t have to stare her in the face. “You get secret texts and rings all the time. Why do you even give a fuck?”

Behind his back, he can hear Mary stand up and make her way towards him, stopping before she reaches him. “Don’t turn this around and make it about me, John! I asked you a question. Answer me!” she shouts out, and he only narrowly misses being hit by the tv remote. It goes flying over his head, breaking into pieces against the wall behind him.

“Christ, Mary!” he yells, flinching from the noise so close to his ear. “It’s just work! All right? It’s the new teacher’s aide that they gave me. He’s making his first lesson and he just had a few questions.” The lies slip so easily through his lips now, he barely even notices them. They take almost no effort at all. He should be worried about that. He hardly cares.

“And in the bathroom?” Mary asks, pointing across the hotel room to the door in question, as if it has personally offended her in some way. Her face looks pinched and drawn. She looks so much older than John remembers ever seeing her. “You were talking to someone in there, but you didn’t want me to hear. That wasn’t your fucking teacher’s aide, John!” Mary hisses at him. She moves towards him, the lines of her body drawn tight. John thinks for a moment that she might actually slap him, she looks so angry. He doesn’t shy away from her. He leans forward to meet her and when she reaches him she stops short.

“I don’t know what to tell you, Mary,” he says to her, voice tight and low. His composure is hanging on by a thread and he doesn’t know what he will do if he is pushed any farther today. “If you’re not going to believe me, then I don’t know what else to say.”

They stare at each other for a moment longer, and Mary looks as if she is about to say something else. Before she has the chance, though, John turns on his heel and exits the room, slamming the door with too much force, afraid of what will happen if he stays.

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“What the fuck is the matter with you, Sherlock? Hmm?” John shouts as he bangs into Sherlock’s bedroom late on Sunday morning, having just gotten back in town from an achingly uncomfortable car ride home with his furious wife. He had dropped her off at their house, unpacked, and then came straight to see Sherlock, finding him in his bedroom, sitting at his desk behind his microscope.

“You can’t do shit like that!” John yells at the child in anger and exasperation. Sherlock barely graces him with a glance, letting John stand at the opposite end of his bedroom as he shouts at him. “Do you understand? All of these things that you do, they aren’t right. They aren’t things that normal people do! Do you understand that?” John stresses, his voice getting progressively
louder as he stays to one side of the room, afraid to move closer for fear of what he might do to Sherlock. John has been angry at him before in the past—many times—but he can’t ever remember a time when he has been this furious with Sherlock.

Sherlock, though, doesn’t seem too concerned with John’s anger, or with his words, or even the volume of his voice. He had barely even looked up from his microscope when John had banged into his room, and now he calmly turns back to it while John goes off on his tirade. “What happened to the trip? I thought you weren’t supposed to be back until late tonight?” Sherlock asks once John stops for breath, sounding unconcerned.

“We left early. Because of you,” John states, staring at him accusingly. “Because we got into a massive row after that stunt you pulled. We couldn’t stand to even pretend to be around each other for the rest of the day, and we made everyone around us uncomfortable. So we had to leave.” John turns away from him, shutting his eyes tight. He can’t even look at Sherlock right now, he is so angry. “Do you know how embarrassing that is, Sherlock, to have her family see us like that? To have them hear us argue about the things that we do?”

Sherlock doesn’t answer, and when John dares a glance back at him he looks like he really couldn’t care less.

John literally seethes at Sherlock’s flippant attitude.

“You can’t do these things,” John stresses once more. “If I didn’t know any better, I’d say you were deliberately trying to get me caught,” he hisses, moving closer to Sherlock, the lines of his body harsh and tense. He has to pull himself up short in front of Sherlock, at the edge of the desk, and hold his hands down by his sides because he isn’t quite sure what he wants to do with them. “You can’t ring me up while I’m on holiday with my wife’s family and have phone sex with me. You can’t throw my wedding ring away. You can’t text me and make me drop my plans with my wife—drop everything that I’m doing—to come running to you. You just can’t do stuff like that!”

His fist hits the flat surface of Sherlock’s desk on his last word, sending the boy’s science equipment rattling about. Sherlock jumps in his seat, looking up at John for what seems like the first time since the man came into the room.

The look that Sherlock gives him, however, is one of cold indifference. Detached anger. The edges of his plump mouth are drawn tight and the corners of his almond shaped eyes are pinched. His face is that emotionless mask that John hates so much. “Don’t tell me what to do unless we’re in bed together, John,” he says, and his tone is indifferent and off-handed. “It’s annoying anywhere else.”

John just stares at him for a moment, disbelieving. “I can’t fucking believe you,” he says incredulously, shaking his head. “You’re just a child, Sherlock. A stubborn, selfish child, and I can’t fucking believe you. This is ridiculous. This whole sodding thing is fucking ridiculous! It’s all become a shambles, and it’s because of you! I have no idea what I’m doing with you, Sherlock. It doesn’t make any sense!” he shouts out, hands coming up to grip at his hair. He feels like he is losing his mind, like everything in his life is just spiralling out of control, like it’s all just crumbling in around him.

And here is Sherlock, sitting at home and playing games. Making things so much harder for him.

_He doesn’t understand_, a voice says in John’s mind. _He doesn’t understand what it’s like for you, to go through the things that you do for him. He wants what he wants, and he just takes from you the way a child does, and he doesn’t think about how it might affect you. He doesn’t care to know._

“You threw the spanner in the works, Sherlock—not me. Because you want to play these fucking
little games!” John stares down at him for a moment, at this child that he is risking everything for. Sherlock looks back at him, all stubborn jaw line and impudent stare. John shakes his head, moving away from Sherlock’s desk and across the room, distancing himself from the boy.

“You asked me once before what I’ve given up for you,” John turns and says to him on a shaky breath, voice soft in the quiet of the bedroom. “You said that I haven’t given up anything, that I still have everything that I would have without you. But that’s not quite true. I’m the one taking all of the risks. I’m the one who will lose it all if we get caught. Me. Not you. What have you given up for me?” he asks Sherlock suddenly, his voice dripping with accusation. “Hmm? What can you give up for me?” he asks again, but continues before Sherlock can respond. “Nothing,” John tells him. “Because you have nothing. I’m the one making all of the sacrifices, I’m the one who is putting everything on the line for an immature, selfish, childish bloody teenager!”

Sherlock stares at him, surprised by his words, stunned into silence.

“It’s all me, Sherlock. Everything. My life, and my career, and my future. My fucking marriage. My wife, for God’s sake. I’m giving up my wife for you.”

At that Sherlock’s heterochromia stare goes cold, icy. John can see all emotion drain from his face almost instantly, once again leaving that off-putting and emotionless mask behind that makes John cringe whenever he looks at it. Sherlock stands up from his desk chair slowly, his moves precise and deliberate, and his eyes never leaving John’s.

“I’m not the reason that you’ve strayed from your wife,” Sherlock tells him. His voice is careful, calculated. John doesn’t trust it for a second. “I’m just the excuse. Take responsibility for your actions, John. It’s the least you can do.”

Take responsibility? Take responsibility? He can’t believe the fucking nerve of this kid, the gall. Sherlock wants John to take responsibility for this mess? A high pitched noise escapes his throat, and he notices belatedly that it sounds disturbingly close to a manic giggle. Because this is just too much all of a sudden.

This is too hard. This is too hard and he just can’t do it anymore. It’s too painful. He never should have done it in the first place.

He shakes his head and there is a burning tightness in his throat, a lump that he tries to swallow down so that he can talk past, so that he can say words that hurt like hell to speak but that he knows need to be said. Words that should have been said a long time ago.

“I can’t do this anymore, Sherlock,” he whispers, voice cracking. “It hurts too damn much. I shouldn’t have let it go this far.” He pauses because he knows there’s no point in dwelling on the past, but he can’t stop the words from escaping his lips either way. “I wish I could take back all of the times I ever gave in to you.”

Sherlock stares at him from across the room with unblinking eyes that waver wetly in the dull light of his bedroom. “I wish you could, too,” he whispers brokenly, his voice just as tight as John’s.

But it’s not the truth. John knows that he would never take them back. Not a single one of them. Despite everything that Sherlock has done, despite everything that John has put them through, he knows that he would never take back any of it. He’d never be able to give up any part of Sherlock. Not now, not ever.

He surges forward suddenly, roughly, taking Sherlock’s face in his hands and crushing the boy’s lips to his own, claiming them. He wants Sherlock to know, needs him to understand, that John
doesn't mean any of it. Sherlock makes a noise of surprise that gets swallowed up by John’s mouth, and then his lips go soft and pliant against John’s, open and lax. John pushes Sherlock up against the nearest wall, hands trailing down his lithe body, fingers dancing across Sherlock’s lower abdomen and making the muscles jump and twitch in anticipation.

Sherlock gasps at the sensation and John sucks gently on his tongue, dipping his fingers under Sherlock’s pyjama bottoms, skimming the edge of his growing hardness. His own erection is pressing into Sherlock’s hip, begging for attention as each second passes, but he ignores it for the moment. He presses Sherlock harder into the wall, kisses him deeper, makes him moan.

Sherlock tastes like cigarettes and broken promises against John’s lips.

He has no idea how they end up like this, every time. He says enough is enough, he makes the decision to break it off, to do the right thing, time and time again, and yet…he never can. They always end up back here. This, what they have, whatever it is, John knows he will never be able to put a name to, but it is crazy, and it stupid, and it is lovely. And it is beautiful.

“God, Sherlock,” John mumbles against the boy’s mouth, biting his bottom lip harshly, making Sherlock whimper. “You drown me, you suffocate me, you make feel alive. I love you.” His hand wraps around Sherlock’s stiff length under his pyjamas, squeezing it too roughly to be pleasurable. He can feel Sherlock’s knees buckle against him, the boy sagging along the wall. John’s weight pressing into him is the only thing keeping him up.

He uses his free hand to pull Sherlock’s pyjama bottoms down awkwardly, tugging on them harshly. John’s teeth leave Sherlock’s bottom lip and make their way down his soft throat, biting and nipping, marking him all along the way. At the feel of the sharp sting on his skin, Sherlock whines and whimpers under the man’s mouth. John growls out a warning at Sherlock’s squirming and squeezes his cock tighter, making Sherlock’s cries of pain turn to pants of pleasure. John’s own prick twitches desperately between his legs as he pulls Sherlock apart with his hand and mouth until he can’t take it anymore—John tears his own trousers open and pushes his jeans and boxers halfway down his thighs, grabbing himself up and pressing them both together. He grips them tight in between his fingers and strokes them as one, and Sherlock simply loses what little composure he has left, wailing as John’s hand moves over them once in a smooth glide. Sweat makes the movement slick and sinful, and John watches his lover in wonder as Sherlock falls apart in front of him.

“That’s it, love,” John moans through his mouthful of Sherlock’s sweat-tinged skin. “Let me know how good it feels. Let me hear it.”

“John, God, John,” Sherlock cries, throwing his head back so hard that it thumps loudly against the wall.

John looks at him and can’t help but be entranced. This boy is a monster; this boy is a marvel. John wraps his hand tighter around the two of them and presses them close together, cocks and stomachs and chests and mouths. “I love you,” he whispers against Sherlock’s lips, a reminder, a promise. He starts to move, rocking in a slow and steady pace that compliments the frantic fluttering of his pulse, the rapid beat of the heart that he can feel in Sherlock’s chest which matches his own, the one that they share. Sherlock pants against his mouth in frantic whimpers of desperation, and John’s hips thrust against Sherlock’s to match the movement of his strokes, pressing Sherlock back against the wall.

“I love you,” he says again, because he doesn’t know what else to say, what else to do. He can feel his orgasm building, the muscles tightening. The heat inside of him is a slow, steady burn. It is
melting him down and turning him to ash, destroying him until there is absolutely nothing left. Nothing left of himself, nothing left of his life. There is only this obsessive need and desire. There is only this. There is only *them*. And when his orgasm burns through him, he realises that this is all there ever was, this is all there ever needs to be. Just this. Just them.

And it is enough.

“I love you,” he pants against Sherlock’s mouth, kissing him deeply, pulling Sherlock’s orgasm from him as well. The feel of Sherlock coming against him, in his hand, while his lips are pressed against Sherlock’s is like kissing the sun.

It is over almost as quickly as it started, but the two are no less shattered by the power of it. They lean against the wall, trying to hold each other up on trembling legs until they can no longer stay upright. Then they end up sliding down to the floor together in a tangled heap of limbs, a sticky mess of semen cooling between them. They stay pressed close together, though, and John can still feel their hearts pounding wildly in their chests, beating against each other.

“Why is it always like this with us?” John asks after a moment, his forehead resting against Sherlock’s as he sits facing the boy. Sherlock is practically in his lap, straddling him. “How is it that you can drive me round the fucking twist, make my life hell, make me think that everything would just be so much easier without you…and then in the next breath I know that I could never live without you? It’s not healthy, Sherlock,” John tells him in all seriousness, shaking his head, their brows rolling across one another’s. “It’s not right.”

Sherlock stares at him, and his expression is solemn, as if he is truly saddened by what he is about to say. “You want me to have answers for you, John. But I don’t,” he confesses, looking sorrowful. “I don’t know why we do this to each other. I don’t know how any of this works. All I know is that I love you,” he says with a small, helpless shrug. On either side of John’s thighs, the man can see Sherlock’s long bare toes curling and uncurling in a nervous, embarrassed kind of way that makes John love him all the more, irrational behaviour and all. “And I’m sorry.”

John wraps his arms around him and thinks about Sherlock’s words. He thinks about how, in Sherlock’s case, “just crazy enough to be” has turned into “just crazy enough to be with each other”.

He wonders briefly if he’s gone mad, and then he wonders if going mad is supposed to feel this fantastic.

Then he realises that he doesn’t give a damn. He has Sherlock, and that’s all that matters. He’ll be mad, as long as Sherlock is mad right alongside him.

“I love you, too,” he answers with a small smile, leaning forward until their foreheads touch. “Git.”

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End Notes:

The third spin off in the daddy kink series will be posted in the upcoming days, though the timeline for that fic doesn’t necessarily fit in with the timeline for TBL.
Things between he and Mary are strained after that weekend, to put it lightly.

She barely talks to him, except to row, and when she starts in on it she doesn’t let up. She can go off about the most inconsequential things and it doesn’t matter—the argument always ends up the same in the end:

“You used to really be something, you know that,” she tells John once over the washing up, voice light and trivial, as if she is talking about how work went after a long day. “I don’t know what you are, now, though. You’re not passionate about anything anymore, John. What happened to all of your passion?” she asks, tone curious. “It’s certainly not here, between us. Maybe if it was, I wouldn’t be so fucking miserable. Maybe if it was, we could have been happy, eventually.”

On another night, their argument ends with the bitter sound of her shrill voice yelling after him as he leaves to go to the pub, “You’d have a lot to give if you still gave a damn, John! If you were worth a damn!”

She knows she has won when she can get him to walk away, and he is doing that more and more often these days, leaving to spend hours staring down at the bottom of a pint when he can’t spend the afternoon with Sherlock. Her favourite, though, is a more direct approach, the kind that has him reaching for his keys almost instantly.

“What kind of man are you, John?” she likes to goad him after they row, the smile on her red lips sharp enough to cut him into a million pieces. “What sort of man would let things end up this way?”

One night, he finally has enough of her taunts and can’t keep his mouth shut as he makes his way towards the door in a rage. “What did I ever do, my whole life, to deserve you?” he shouts out, whirling around to look at her, face hard and shoulders tense. “To deserve this? The way you treat me?”

She stops short, having followed him to the door of their home, and stares at him. If she is surprised by his sudden outburst, she doesn’t show it.

“Hmm?” he presses, wanting to know, needing to hear her answer. “What did I ever do to you?”

“Everything,” she whispers, her voice full of anger and contempt for him.

John looks at her for a moment, shocked. Despite all the years of frustration between them he is still taken aback by the deep hatred she feels for him, this woman whom he once loved with all of his heart. Something aches deep in his chest. There is a tightness in his throat but he doesn’t want her to see him feel any of these things, so he turns his back on her quickly, grabbing up his coat and
pulling open the front door. He slams it shut between them, breathing a sigh of relief once he is on the other side, away from her. When he gets into his car, he heads straight for the pub without a second thought, ordering a double whisky and draining half of it in one pull. He is ordering another before he is even done with his first.

John knows he made the decision to stay married right now because it is the smartest, safest one for him and Sherlock. It is also the most painful, though, and John knows he can't continue on this path any longer. He can't keep hurting Sherlock like this, and he certainly can't keep living like this. He tries to remind himself that this is the best thing for them all. He has to stay married to Mary for just a little while longer, at least until the end of the school year. He can’t leave her in the middle of the semester because neither he nor Sherlock is strong enough to not do something stupid, he is sure of this. He’s proven this, and so has Sherlock. But as John sits at the bar and thinks about his wife and all of the hateful things she says, the hurtful way she treats him, he doesn’t know how much longer he keep up the charade. Not when he knows he has something wonderful in his life just waiting for him on the fringes.

His mind plays back the row he had with Mary before storming out, the things she said to him, and he can’t stop them from ringing in his ears, no matter how much he tries to block them out, no matter how much whisky he tries to drown them under.

He’ll never understand how she knows exactly what to say to cut him open so keenly, her words like a knife sinking straight into the heart of him.

There are times when he hates himself, hates feeling this way, hates Mary for making him think these things about himself. There are times when he loathes his life—everything in it and everything he has become—with every fibre of his being. Then there are times when he thinks about Sherlock, and John knows that the only thing keeping him from breaking apart is Sherlock holding him together.

He smiles to himself as he thinks about his student, this whirlwind of inexperienced life and wild innocence who has saved John. He takes another large sip of his double whisky and thinks about the way Sherlock holds him in his arms and makes everything better, the way Sherlock kisses him and makes all of John’s problems seem so small and insignificant. The way Sherlock’s body feels next to his, so right and perfect that nothing else seems to matter in this world. Just Sherlock, just them.

He sits in the pub and fiddles with his mobile. Fuck, just thinking about Sherlock is getting him hard. He knows he is one lucky bastard, because Sherlock is his and if John wants to just go round to have a shag, then he can.

John smiles wickedly at the thought and finishes his second double whisky, preparing to leave the pub and head over to Sherlock’s house.

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As soon as Sherlock answers the door, John is on him. His movements are sloppy and uncoordinated, but they're both giggling and laughing as John knocks them into walls in his attempt to get them to Sherlock’s bedroom so it hardly seems to matter. It isn’t until they get to Sherlock’s room and John pushes the skinny teen down onto the bed, hard, that John realises just exactly how he wants this scenario to go. He grasps Sherlock’s thin wrists in his harsh grip and pins them above Sherlock’s head, tearing a moan out of both of their throats.

John knows he is being a little rougher with Sherlock than he would be under normal circumstances. But Sherlock has told him before that he doesn’t mind a bit of harsh treatment.
Sherlock has said that he likes it, in fact, and that he can certainly handle it. So John doesn’t feel guilty. Actually, John doesn’t feel much of anything except a mind-consuming arousal, a body-lightening buzz, and a simmering anger left over from Mary’s words. His row with his wife is the last thing he wants to be thinking about right now, but he can’t seem to shake the lingering irritation which clings to the edges of his mind. He comes to find that the more he tries not to think about his fight with Mary as he kisses and touches Sherlock, the more prevalent it becomes in his head. His hands let go of Sherlock’s wrists and move down to begin to try to undress them, thinking that more skin is the distraction that his brain needs. His fingers, though, don’t seem to want to work right and his mind isn’t helping, still stuck on a repeat loop of the last words Mary spoke to him. He manages to get some of their clothing undone and out of the way with no small amount of difficulty, but he gives the rest up as a bad job and just lets his hands wander in a drunken haze over the flesh he has exposed.

John hates that he is thinking about the row he had with his wife while he is with Sherlock. He hates that he can’t get Mary’s words out of his head while he is kissing Sherlock, touching him, undressing him and stroking his cock as it hardens in his hand. John climbs on top of Sherlock, continuing to tear at his own clothing in a desperate attempt to get them off, wanting to feel Sherlock against him, still convinced that will drown out the sound of his wife’s words. His fingers continue to refuse to work, though, and he growls in frustration as he plucks uselessly at his buttons, his movements sharp and agitated.

“Here, let me,” Sherlock says softly, lifting his large hands to nimbly slip buttons through holes and undo John’s flies, helping the man out of his clothes as John presses uncoordinated kisses to his mouth and jaw the whole time, hindering Sherlock’s progress more than helping.

When Sherlock finally has him naked, nestled between his pale spread thighs, John wastes no time rubbing dry fingers across the boy’s hole. He can feel it clench as Sherlock gasps against his mouth and bucks into him, the tight ring of muscle closing up. Sherlock’s arm shoots out to grab blindly at something on his bedside table, knocking over empty tea cups and boxes of nicotine patches. He shoves a bottle at John’s chest.

“Lube,” he mumbles, not even bothering to pull his mouth away from John’s lips. The word gets lost in a smear of tongues and teeth.

John grabs it and manages to fumble it open, spilling some of the slick onto his fingers. He swipes his hand over Sherlock’s hole and doesn’t give him much time to brace himself before he is sliding a finger in, fast and deep and easy. Sherlock gasps at the sudden intrusion, throwing his head back against the pillow.

“Want you,” John says as he presses kisses to Sherlock’s neck, and what he knows he means is “want you to make it all better, want you to make me forget her, want you to make me feel decent and good and fucking worth something” and he hopes like hell that those words don’t slip out of his mouth.

“You have me,” Sherlock reassures him, bringing long arms around to wrap across John’s shoulders, keeping them pressed close together.

John knows that it isn’t enough, though, it will never be enough, and he pushes another finger into Sherlock’s body. The teen winces and draws in a sharp breath, and John groans at the tightness and heat surrounding his fingers. His cock throbs against Sherlock’s thigh and he knows he won’t be able to wait much longer before he needs to push inside that wet warmth, before he has to have Sherlock surround him, cover him, take him in.

He scissors his fingers and slips a third one in slowly, careful to be a little easier. Sherlock moans
and presses back against his hand, spreading his legs wider. His fingernails bite into John’s bare shoulders so hard that the man is sure there will be marks left later.

John doesn’t give a damn about that right now, though. All he wants is to shove his cock into Sherlock, take him, fuck him hard and fast. He wants to get lost in the pleasure that only Sherlock’s body can give him. All he wants is for Sherlock to make him forget. Forget everything. Forget Mary and her fucking words, sharp and cutting; forget his loveless marriage that he has resolved himself to stay in for just a little while longer; forget the stale taste of whisky in his mouth and the bitter hurt of wondering if Mary’s words are true.

John’s hand is shaking as he pulls his fingers out of Sherlock’s arse and rubs the leftover slick along his prick, coating it. He uses a hand to guide his cock while his other pushes one of Sherlock’s thighs up to the teen’s chest, keeping it out of the way and letting John see his loosened, shiny hole.

“Need you,” John tells him, voice broken and brain practically unable to function properly.

“Take me,” Sherlock replies, reaching down with both hands and grabbing his arse cheeks, spreading himself open for John. The man groans at the sight and doesn’t waste one more moment simply staring. He moves his hips forward and presses into the body of Sherlock below him.

Sherlock is tight and perfect around him, taking him in and caressing him in all the right ways. He is heavenly; he is sinful. Yet, despite this, John still can’t get his wife out of his head as he quickens the snap of his hips against Sherlock’s, hoping that if he fucks Sherlock harder, his wife will be erased from his mind.

He can’t believe Mary. He can’t believe she could say such mean things. He can’t believe that she can ruin even this for him—his time with Sherlock, something which is special and untouchable and his—by getting into his head with her stupid, ridiculous words and refusing to let him forget, for even a moment.

“Not so hard, John.”

Her words ring in his ears, an echo of every failure in his life. “Not good enough”, “not strong enough”, “not man enough”. John doesn’t want to believe them, but he’d be lying if he said that thoughts of it didn’t keep him up at night. Once there was nothing that John Watson couldn’t do if he put his mind to it, but now there is just a broken man with a hole in his shoulder and a miserable, pathetic life.

“Slow down.”

He knows that everything she’s said isn’t true. He knows it. But hearing it over and over and over again is enough to break any man, even one stronger than John.

“John, stop.”

He’ll show her, though. He’ll prove her wrong. He’ll—

“Stop, John, you’re hurting me!”

Fuck.

He immediately stops thrusting and looks down at Sherlock for what seems like the first time since John began fucking him. Sherlock’s face is set in a grimace of pain and John rapidly becomes aware of Sherlock’s hands on his hips, a steady pressure trying to take control of John’s thrusts in a
futile effort to minimise the pain.

“Oh, God, Sherlock,” John says, pulling out of him quickly in an effort to make things better, to stop Sherlock from hurting. Even that, though, causes Sherlock pain as John’s balance is a bit off due to the whisky, and his movements are jerky and rushed. “I’m sorry. I’m so sorry, love,” John stammers, crawling off of Sherlock carefully and kneeling beside him, running fluttering hands all over Sherlock’s body in an attempt to assess the damage done. “I don’t know what came over me. I wasn’t thinking clearly, I was…” he runs through the excuses in his head, a million of them, each one as meaningless as the last. There is never an excuse good enough for hurting Sherlock this way, he knows.

He sighs, his hands stilling on Sherlock’s naked body, one on his hip and one over his heart. “Jesus, I’m no more of a man than your father is,” John states with a grimace, pulling his hands away from Sherlock as if they had been burned. He turns his back on the boy and drops his head in his hands, unable to look at Sherlock for a moment longer, afraid of what he will see in Sherlock’s eyes.

Behind him, he can hear Sherlock shuffling about on the bed. He can feel the mattress shift as Sherlock moves, coming up behind John and reaching tentative hands out to touch his bare shoulder. “Don’t say that,” Sherlock tells him soothingly, voice a low and warm rumble next to John’s ear as he moves in close to hug him, melding against John’s back. John wants to push him away, tell Sherlock that he doesn’t deserve him, but he isn’t strong enough for that. He knows this.

“You are a great man. More importantly, you’re a good one,” Sherlock is whispering in his ear, and John has to bite back a sob because it is exactly what he needs to hear right now, and he doesn’t deserve to hear it. Not after what he just did to Sherlock. “Brave and caring and loving. One day I hope to be half as good as you are.”

A sound does escape John’s throat then, something gut-wrenching and sobering. If Sherlock is going to strive to be half as good as he thinks John is, then John figures he can try to be a man who Sherlock should look up to. The kind of man that Sherlock thinks he is; the kind of man that Sherlock sees him as.

The thought lightens his heart in a way that the rough tumble in bed didn’t.

John raises him arms to wrap around Sherlock’s where they are holding him around his chest and he turns his head to press a kiss to Sherlock’s temple as his head hangs over John’s shoulder. He smiles happily, warmed by Sherlock’s words. “I don’t know how I got this lucky. What did I do to deserve you, hmm?” he asks, lips sliding down to Sherlock’s cheek.

Sherlock blushes at John’s sentimentality and his vocal declaration. “Everything,” he replies, turning his head slightly so that their lips slot together. Sherlock’s are still swollen and red from the vicious kisses John had given him earlier, and the thought leads John to worry about his rough treatment of other areas of Sherlock’s body. He turns towards Sherlock and faces him once more, letting his hands run carefully over Sherlock’s arms and down to his fingers as Sherlock sits on his bed and looks at him curiously.

“Let me see,” John tells him, not looking him in the eye.

Sherlock frowns slightly in confusion. “What?”

John tries to fight down his blush. “Let me see,” he repeats, voice clear. “I want to see if anything is torn or bleeding.”
At that, it is Sherlock’s turn to blush. “John, it’s… fine, I promise,” he reassures the man.

However, John just cups his hand along Sherlock’s cheek and then runs his fingers through Sherlock’s hair. “Sherlock, please,” he says, voice and face softening. “Will you let me see for myself, love?” Sherlock is probably right, but John just has to know for certain. He doesn’t think he will be able to live with himself if he hurt Sherlock and didn’t try to make it better.

Sherlock releases a shaky breath and then nods, biting his lip. He moves to turn over on the bed slowly, as if he is still unsure, but John stops him. The blond leans down and gives him a soft, tender kiss, full of apology and regret. He can feel Sherlock relax a little bit, opening up to him and returning his kiss, letting John lick into his mouth and taste him, biting at his lips when John turns the kiss into something a bit deeper, more urgent. John’s hands trail down Sherlock’s neck, over nipples that have pebbled into hard peaks once again and down across his belly, a bit softer now than when John first met him, though not much. John’s fingers dance lightly over Sherlock’s cock, stirring to life once again, and dip down to rub along his bollocks, soft and full from his earlier arousal. Sherlock moans at the gentle pressure and John lets his fingertip press into his perineum, dragging along the sensitive skin as he nips once more at Sherlock’s lips before pulling away from him entirely.

“Turn over so I can see, love.”

Sherlock is a little more eager to turn around now, panting in arousal as he does so. His cheeks are flushed red and his lips shine wet and bruised in the low lamplight of his room. When he kneels on his hands and knees with his arse up in the air on his bed, presenting himself to John, his cock hangs heavy and full between his thighs, just like the first time John fucked him.

The sight is enough to get John’s cock completely hard again without so much as a touch from his own hand.

“Oh my God,” John whispers, bending forward and placing reverent hands on Sherlock’s hips, whether it’s to steady Sherlock or himself, he isn’t sure. “Look at you. So beautiful. How can you possibly be real?”

He leans down and kisses Sherlock softly on his sacrum, on each side of his spine in the hollows where he has little dimples above his arse. He then places two more kisses on each hip as his fingers tighten, trying to control the growing urge inside of himself. Beneath him, with every press of his dry lips to soft skin, Sherlock whines and shifts restlessly, and John’s grip grows a little tighter until he finally pulls back and says, “I’m going to look now, all right?”

“Yes,” Sherlock gasps, his face pressed into the pillow.

John doesn’t waste another moment. His hands slide away from Sherlock’s hips and along his arse cheeks, gripping the fleshy globes and then spreading them apart. His breath catches in his throat when Sherlock’s hole is revealed to him and his cock jumps against his thigh.

Sherlock’s entrance is wet with lube and stretched open, the muscle relaxed and soft looking. There is some redness from its previous use but nothing too severe, not like what John was worried about. There is no tearing that he can see but he wants to be sure, so he takes two fingers and slides them along the rim softly, letting Sherlock grow accustomed to the sensation.

Below him, head shoved into the pillow, Sherlock moans.

“All right?” John asks, a little breathless. “Nothing hurt?”
Sherlock shakes his head.

“Sore?” John wants to know.

“No,” Sherlock responds, panting and squirming. “Sensitive,” he tells the ex-doctor truthfully, and John is thankful that he is being honest. John knows that after being fucked, it would be a complete lie if Sherlock said he wasn’t tender at all.

He lets one finger dip into the loosened hole and Sherlock releases a relieved little breath, pushing back against John’s touch. John’s free hand grips his hips to still him, not wanting Sherlock to hurt himself. “Easy, love,” he says, and Sherlock whines miserably.

Two fingers slip in with a little more resistance, but John is gentle and slow, methodical. He watches Sherlock carefully but there isn’t the slightest hint of pain on his face or his body. “It’s not painful at all?” he asks Sherlock one last time as he slips his two fingers out of Sherlock’s body slowly, feeling around one last time for tearing in his rectal walls. “Not even a little bit of soreness?”

Sherlock shakes his head, looking back over his shoulder. “No, John.”

His fingers slip out and leave Sherlock’s hole gaping emptily at him, enticingly. The skin around his entrance looks so soft and tender, deliciously pink from use, and John has the sudden undeniable urge to taste it. He’s never done that with a lover before, never had it done to him. He’s never felt the desire. But Sherlock’s arse looks so gorgeous, spread out for him, waiting to be used any way he wants.

John pushes Sherlock’s arse cheeks apart once again and leans in slightly closer. He can smell Sherlock, mixed with the synthetic fragrance of the lubricant that they use. Sherlock’s body’s natural scent is stronger here, something musky and dark and warm. John breathes it in deep and his stomach and groin tighten at the intimacy of it. Sherlock smells like love, he smells like home, and John’s head reels from the familiarity of it. Without thinking, he flicks his tongue out and lets it slide over the soft skin behind Sherlock’s bollocks, and he can hear the teen’s breath hitch even from his spot in between Sherlock’s legs. John lets his tongue lick over the soft globes of Sherlock’s balls, feeling them move against his lips, warm and full. Then he slides back across to place another hot, messy kiss to that sensitive spot behind the boy’s testicles, where the skin is tight and flat and untouched, dipping down into the entrance of his arse.

Sherlock releases a shaky breath at John’s actions, but seems determined to find out what the man is playing at. When he speaks, though, his voice is a complete mess, breaking in the most adorable way that John has never heard before. “J-John what are you…?”

John has never felt the desire to do this to someone before, he’s never been in a relationship where he has wanted to be this intimate with anyone, even his wife. He cautiously reaches out with a searching tongue and gently swipes over Sherlock’s hole, and he can feel his lover tremble against his hands, his mouth.

It is the most arousing thing John has ever witnessed.

“Oh!” Sherlock’s question gets cut off as John licks over the soft opening of his body, shuddering violently. John can see his long fingers clench and tangle in his sheets, shoulders going tight and tense at the strange sensation.

John dips his tongue in to taste Sherlock once more, feeling the strange change in texture between the different areas of his skin, sliding his tongue over the loose entrance which is now trembling
under his mouth.

“John,” he hears Sherlock say from the head of the bed, but John ignores him. He is too wrapped up in this, his senses overloaded with Sherlock, his mouth full of him.

John works Sherlock’s arsehole, slowly coaxing it open even wider with patient persistence. He can feel it relaxing as he licks at it, fluttering and giving way under his diligent, delicate ministrations to allow more of John’s tongue entry. The noises Sherlock is making are deliciously obscene. They are heady and amazing, and they go straight to John’s cock.

Beneath him, Sherlock barely seems able to control himself. He pants and squirms, and John’s grip on his arse cheeks is in part just trying to keep a steadying grip on him. He is holding on to the teen so hard that he wouldn’t be surprised if Sherlock has little finger-shaped bruises along his arse cheeks tomorrow, and he finds that he doesn’t feel as badly as he might have thought he would about that fact. A rumble of possessive pride rolls through his chest and he licks a long stripe up and down Sherlock’s perineum, across his bollocks and along the underside of his straining cock, making Sherlock give a frustrated sob.

John realises suddenly with a satisfied, pleased sense of selfishness, that he is the only one who has ever touched Sherlock like this. He is the only one, ever, to touch Sherlock with any kind of love or care, but more importantly, he is the only person to touch Sherlock’s body with lips and cock and tongue, and to show him love this way. And if John has his way, he will be the last.

“John, please,” Sherlock calls out, sounding close to his breaking point.

“What, love?” John asks, tearing his face away from Sherlock’s most sensitive places. His mouth and chin are positively covered in saliva, it’s uncomfortable and obscene and John is surprised by how much he loves the feel of it. “What do you want?”

“Touch me,” Sherlock begs him on a shrill cry.

John smiles wickedly at him even though he knows Sherlock can’t see him. “I am touching you,” John teases, gripping Sherlock’s hips tighter and spreading his cheeks farther apart with his thumbs, the digits slipping over the smooth skin which is now slick with John’s spit and caressing Sherlock’s most intimate places inadvertently. “Can’t you feel me?”

Before Sherlock can even open his mouth to answer, John places a kiss over his wet, open little hole. At that, Sherlock’s words turn into a positively filthy moan that has John pulling away from him so that he can take a moment to stroke himself and relieve some of the nearly painful pressure throbbing in his own cock.

After he has stroked himself for a moment and Sherlock has backed away from the jagged edge that John has pushed him to, the man bends low to lick over him again, dipping his tongue into the soft, open hole of Sherlock’s body as the boy cries out below him. He loves it so much, the feel of Sherlock against his tongue, under his mouth; the taste of such secret, sensitive skin on his lips.

He savours it, takes his time with it, licking and laving the brunet until Sherlock is nearly insensate, trembling and moaning incomprehensibly under John’s ministrations and attentions. John takes a moment to stop what he is doing and marvel at it. This is the most sexually intimate thing he’s ever done with anyone, and there isn’t a moment of it that he isn’t completely lost in, that he doesn’t want to burn into his memory and hold with him forever, keep with him always.

John watches as Sherlock’s body trembles and then finally settles. Then and only then does he dip the tip of more fingers in, two from each hand, to pry Sherlock’s arse cheeks gently apart, letting
his fingertips slip smoothly into his wet, loose entrance. John uses his fingers to stretch Sherlock open as wide as he can go and leaves a sucking kiss over his centre, dipping his tongue in to taste him deeply.

Sherlock comes, hard, untouched, with a shuddering cry.

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The words that come out of his mouth after such an intimate moment shared between them taste heavy and bitter on his tongue, like ash choking him. He doesn’t want to say it—doesn’t want to bring it up, doesn’t want to ever talk about what just happened, what he did—but he knows he can’t hide from it. He isn’t a coward, and he isn’t a man who runs away from problems, so he takes a breath and squares his shoulders, but he can’t seem to look his teenage lover in the eye when he whispers, “I’ll stop, Sherlock.”

For his part, Sherlock either doesn’t seem to hear him or doesn’t seem to understand what he is talking about. “What?” he asks, trying to reach out a lazy hand to make a move towards John’s straining erection which has been denied attention since hurting Sherlock, as if in penance for what it did to the boy.

John’s own hand comes out to grab Sherlock’s wrist, stopping him from touching the man’s body, from making contact with him, his gun-calloused grip hard around Sherlock’s slender wrist. “Drinking,” John clarifies, but doesn’t say anything more.

That gives Sherlock pause. He stops trying to touch John and looks at the man sitting on the bed. “John,” he says softly, the word barely more than a release of breath. His eyes are wide and round in his face and he seems almost surprised at John’s statement. John thinks it is rather telling that Sherlock should be so stunned over something that John thinks is rather insignificant. Perhaps his drinking isn’t as little a thing as John has thought it is, after all. That fact is rather worrying, but he’ll deal more with that later.

“That’s not fair to you,” John explains his reasoning to Sherlock while the teen sits there in front of him, looking endearingly sex-tousled and stunned silent. “You’ve had to put up with that sort of thing all your life, and I don’t want to be just another person who uses it as an excuse to hurt you.” There is a dangerous tightness growing in his throat, making it difficult to speak. John knows that if he doesn’t stop talking soon, he’s going to do something ridiculous, so he shuts up and stares at the boy in front of him.

“John,” Sherlock says, still looking as if he is stunned and doesn’t have the first clue as to what to say. “You don’t have to. I don’t mind.”

John frowns deeply at that, growing slightly angry, and shakes his head, reaching a hand out to grab Sherlock and bring him close. “That doesn’t matter. I mind,” he tells Sherlock, pulling him into a hug, dragging Sherlock closer to him in the bed. “And you should, too. You don’t have to let people walk all over you, or let them hurt you, just so that they will stay with you. I know drinking bothers you—I’m not as stupid as you think I am. You have an alcoholic father who beats you; of course drinking bothers you. You should have said something to me about it before now. I’m sorry I didn’t see it myself. It’s unforgivable, what I did to you.”

John lays them down and gathers Sherlock in his arms. He holds Sherlock like he will never let him go, like Sherlock is something breakable and precious and John has just put another crack in him. “I’m so sorry, love,” he whispers into Sherlock’s dark, curly hair as he settles them into position, placing a kiss in the mess of tangles, his flagging erection long forgotten. “I won’t ever be able to make up for hurting you, but I’ll try. And I’ll start by never drinking again. I promise.”
Sherlock lets John hold him for a moment before he returns the embrace, snaking thin arms around John’s naked, warm torso as well. He settles his head on John’s good shoulder and doesn’t say anything for a long moment. He uses the darkness of the room to his advantage before finally asking, in a quiet, still kind of voice, “You’d do that for me?” His tone is soft and his words are hesitant, as if he is afraid of the answer.

John’s head turns down to look at him as best he can in the darkness from such a sharp angle. He can’t believe that Sherlock still has to ask him questions like that. He can’t believe that Sherlock still has those sorts of doubts in his mind. For all his brilliancy and maturity and independence, when Sherlock is stripped bare in front of John he just can’t hide his fear and insecurity and thoughts of worthlessness. John still wants to change that; John will still say or do anything to get him to feel differently.

And he will, soon. All he needs is the right time. He has been thinking about his decision to leave Mary more and more recently, the thoughts running rampant in his head. He thinks about the flat on Baker Street in London, about a life with Sherlock, about a divorce from Mary, and he knows it is what he wants. But he still knows that now is not the right time. They are still only three quarters of the way through the school year and Sherlock is still his student—he knows the impetuous child well enough to realise that if he were to divorce Mary now, Sherlock would not expect them to wait to start a relationship. He is impatient and demanding and spoilt, and John cannot stand up to his will—he knows this. The teacher is in a very delicate position at the moment. He tells himself once again that staying married, at least for the time being, is the best thing for both of them right now. That certainly doesn’t mean, though, that he doesn’t still love Sherlock with all of his heart and soul, and he’ll do whatever it takes to remind Sherlock about that every chance he gets, in any way he can. But he is still backed into a corner as far as his marriage is concerned, and he hates it.

He sighs heavily into the stillness of the room around them. “I really should clean you up and let you go to sleep,” he tells Sherlock, voice rumbly and content.

Sherlock just snuggles deeper into John’s shoulder, pressing a smile into John’s skin. “But I want you to stay here with me.” He tightens his hold around John, practically melting against the man, making sure he can’t move.

“Who said that I was leaving?” John asks with a warm smile, rubbing his nose into Sherlock’s messy hair. He wraps his arms tighter around Sherlock, holding him closer to his bed-warm body. He has every intention of staying with Sherlock through the night, and he wants his student to know it. He wants Sherlock to be able to feel it in the looseness of his limbs and muscles. “I’d do anything for you, Sherlock,” John whispers into dark hair, blending black into the shadows around them. He kisses Sherlock’s head and strokes his fingers along the body against him, touching everywhere. Sherlock practically melts into him, sighing softly against his neck. “Anything. All you ever have to do is ask.”
As John makes his way home the next day after work, he is dead tired and thinking longingly of an early night in. Sherlock had cancelled their afternoon meeting and John didn’t have his class today, so John is hoping for an evening free of Sherlock-fuelled thoughts for once, devoid of replaying every precious minute they were together like a video on loop. He doesn’t know why his mind insists on doing it to him, after he’s spent the whole day with his lover, but he’s really hoping tonight will be different and he can just relax and turn in early for once.

When he gets inside his house, though, he stops dead in the middle of the entrance of his home, staring into his sitting room.

There is Sherlock Holmes, sitting on his couch next to his wife. They are talking animatedly to each other in soft tones and sharing a cup of tea.

No, this isn’t right, his mind thinks frantically. This can’t be happening. Why is this happening?

“What the fuck is going on here?” he asks before he can stop himself, and both Sherlock and Mary turn away from each other to look up at him. The expressions on their faces show slight surprise at the anger they hear in his voice. John’s eyes slide to Sherlock subtly, because he knows that the boy can’t be startled at his reaction to this—this stunt that he has pulled, once again. Yet there Sherlock sits, looking young and somehow smaller than John knows he really is, and coming across as somewhat nervous as he glances over at Mary while he sits next to her, a teacup held delicately in his large, clumsy-looking hand.

“Oh, John,” Mary says in greeting, setting her teacup carefully down on the coffee table. Her body is angled towards Sherlock’s on the sofa and she is smiling softly at the teen, and John knows that he has just interrupted a deep conversation. His head spins. He can’t seem to wrap his mind around the altogether innocent scene they create. “I’ve just been chatting with one of your students. Sherlock,” she tells him, as if he doesn’t know. “Such a bright young boy.” Her empty hand moves to pat Sherlock on his knee, and the smile she gives Sherlock grows into something bigger and warmer as John continues to look at them.

John can’t even think straight anymore.

“How did…where did you…” he splutters, staring at them from his spot by the doorway. He doesn’t even know what it is he wants to say. He wants to ask why. Why Sherlock is doing this, why he thought this would ever be a good idea, what is going through his impossibly thick skull? He wants to ask Mary why she is letting gorgeous, charming, sociopathic teenage boys who are clearly in love with her husband into their house, and why she is serving them tea out of the service that they were given for their wedding, and why she is looking at Sherlock with that soft, friendly smile.

John, however, can’t wrap his tongue around any of that. All he can do is stare at the picture of
calm serenity before him. His wife and his teenage lover sitting in his living room sharing a cuppa.

John feels like he might have a panic attack.

Mary frowns at him from her seat across the room and seems to notice something is off. She stands up suddenly, excusing herself to Sherlock and walking towards John. Sherlock’s sharp eyes stay on her the entire time as she crosses the sitting room. John stares back and forth between them, his wife approaching him and Sherlock watching her. He doesn’t know what to do, so he simply stands there and waits for Mary to reach him.

When she gets to him, Mary steps close so that she can lean in and whisper to him, her eyes trailing back towards Sherlock imperceptibly. John has to hold his breath so that she can’t hear how loudly he is panting in his anxiousness.

“He knocked on the door about a half hour ago,” she tells John lowly. “Said that he was having some sort of issue. A personal home issue that he only felt comfortable talking to you about or something. Said that you really know how to help the other students deal with their problems, and he was hoping you could help him out, too. Poor little duck,” she says, throwing Sherlock a sympathetic look out of the corner of her eye. “I let him come in and wait for you. I couldn’t send him away. He looked so sad.”

John stares at her for a moment. He is so amazed that she could be fooled completely by Sherlock that John forgets for a second that the boy is even there until he hears the deep voice from across the room.

“I’m sorry, Mr. Watson,” Sherlock is saying, looking down in his lap contritely. An act, John knows. He knows this all too well and he isn’t fooled by it, not for a second. He strides around Mary and moves towards Sherlock intently as the teen continues, “I know I shouldn’t have just—”

But Sherlock’s words are cut off as John reaches him and grabs him roughly around his thin arm, dragging him up off of the sofa and pushing him towards the door. “You have to go. Now,” John growls out as he shoves Sherlock bodily out of the room and into the entrance of his house. “You shouldn’t be here. Why are you here?” He means for it to come out as an accusation but it sounds more like a plea to his ears.

“John, don’t be rude!” he hears Mary shout from behind him, her voice tinged with shock at seeing him treat a child—one of his pupils—this way. “He needs your help with something!”

At her words John turns back to Mary, Sherlock standing behind him, and barks out a humorless laugh, unable to help himself. “He doesn’t need my help with anything, believe me,” he tells her, voice as hard as the lines on his face. “He knows how to get out of whatever mess he puts himself in.”

Mary frowns at him, her lips pursing. She doesn’t understand what he means, all she knows is that she doesn’t like how John is acting. “You’re being a bit of an arse, you know,” she tells him bluntly.

“Oh, am I?” John asks, and his voice indicates that he could care less if he is or is not. Everyone else seems not to care whether or not they are. Mary never did, before, when she would cheat on him. Sherlock sure as hell doesn’t, right now, standing in his home between John and his wife.

“Yes,” Mary replies, “you are.”

John shakes his head, done with her and her stupid, pointless conversation. He turns back to
Sherlock, who has stayed surprisingly quiet and docile during the whole interaction, though the look on his face is unreadable.

“You have to go. Now,” John tells him, pushing him towards the door once again, though not as harshly this time. His hands on Sherlock’s back are somewhat softer, less tense. He allows his fingers to curve along the contours of Sherlock’s body, rubbing slightly, a silent plea for Sherlock to stop playing this game, whatever it is. “You shouldn’t be here. It’s highly inappropriate.”

They reach the door finally and John leans forward to open it, brushing intimately close to Sherlock, their shoulders bumping. Sherlock turns into him and tilts his face towards John’s in a way that is too familiar to be considered accidental, but John hurriedly opens the door and pulls back, clearing his throat and licking his lips. His eyes slide nervously over to Mary, who is watching them carefully, though the frown on her face says that she is angry, not suspicious. John gives Sherlock one final push to get him out of his house and away from his wife as quickly as possible, to be done with this nightmare.

“We’ll talk about this later, Holmes,” John promises Sherlock, his tone holding a hint of warning.

Sherlock smirks at him as he exits John’s house, turning around on John’s front step to grace him with one last devilish look. “I look forward to it, Mr. Watson.”

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When the door closes, John feels like he can breathe again. He exhales softly, aware that Mary is still behind him, watching him. He can feel her stare boring through his back as he leans against his front door, not ready to turn around just yet and face her.

“I asked him about your new teacher’s aide,” her voice says softly behind him.

“W-what?” he asks, turning around, his stomach clenching in anxiousness. He knows where this is headed.

“You know, the one who you claim was ringing you that whole time we were with my family last weekend about a ‘lesson plan’?” Her voice is mockingly amicable, as if she is asking him about something vaguely frivolous and unimportant. “Sherlock says that he’s young. And cute. And that he likes you, apparently.”

John frowns and moves away from the door, towards the now empty sitting room where two cups of half-drunk tea are sitting on the coffee table. “Yes, well, Sherlock has been known to lie,” he replies, forcing his voice to be off-handed. The words taste foul coming out of his mouth. He never wants to speak ill of Sherlock, and he hates that he is having to. He hates Mary for making him.

Mary follows behind him, the lines of her body rigid and stiff in her anger. “Really, John? Because I don’t think that he’s lying. Why would he lie to me about that? What purpose would he possibly have for lying to me?”

“I don’t know, Mary!” John finally snaps, turning to her and shouting, his calm demeanour shattering under his wife’s intense scrutiny. “Fuck! Why do you always have to turn everything into an argument? Can’t we have one night—one bloody sodding night—where you don’t try to tear my head off?”

She quiets, as if she surprised her with his outburst. John’s heart beats wildly in his chest, anger and frustration and years of resentment bubbling up and coursing through his veins, pumping
adrenaline through him. He looks at her then, smiling coldly. “What the hell does it matter to you
anyways, if I’m fucking around? You fuck around all the time,” he tells her, and a part of him
can’t believe that he is saying this to her, that he is speaking to her this way. Another part of him,
though, can’t help but relish the sharp look of pain that his words cause her.

She stares at him for a long, silent moment, surprise and hurt and sadness and fear all flitting
across her face in rapid succession, too fast for him to see. That’s fine though; those feelings aren’t
meant for him to soothe away and make better anymore, anyways. Mary hides them all behind her
mask of anger and indifference, like she has been for years now, and presses her lips together until
they stop trembling and she is in control of her emotions once again.

“I hate you, John,” she tells him softly, but her words are no less truthful for their quietness. “I
really, truly do. I wish I had never married you.” She looks him dead in the eye, tears gathering at
the corners but not falling and her lips trembling. “I’ve wasted so much of my life on you, on us.
I’ve wasted so much of myself. And I hate you for taking that from me.”

Her words are like a stab in gut, sharp and painful and opening him up, slicing right through him.
John opens his mouth to reply, to say something biting and caustic meant to cut her just as deeply,
to hurt her just as badly, but he stops himself before the words are out of his mouth. He doesn’t
want that. He doesn’t want any of this. He runs a hand through his greying hair and down his
lined face, sighing wearily.

“What are we doing, Mary?” John asks her, because he honestly, doesn’t know. He has no idea
anymore. He is so damn tired. John looks at the woman who he had once been happy to call his
wife. He thinks of her cold countenance, the chill he feels when he thinks of her compared to the
warmth of his feelings for Sherlock, and he doesn’t even know why he was trying to fight for them
in the first place now, why he wanted them to work out and stay together. He knows that he has
been telling himself that it is best if he waits until the end of the school year to leave her, but he
can barely even remember why he thought that was better than this, better than what they are doing
to each other now. “What are we still doing with each other?” he wonders out loud. “Why don’t
we just get divorced?”

Mary scoffs at that, a derisive little laugh that hurts John and makes him cringe. “So that you can
run off with your teacher’s aide?” she asks mockingly, voice dripping with venom and malice.
“Not a fucking chance, John. All these years that we’ve been having problems you’ve never
wanted to leave me, you’ve never agreed to divorce me when I wanted it. But now that you’re
getting a piece of arse on the side you want to just throw our marriage away, when it’s convenient
for you? That’s real chivalrous, John. How manly of you.” She says it as if she thinks he is
anything but.

“I’m not getting a piece of arse on the side,” he says automatically, voice harder than it should be
for someone who, supposedly, has nothing to hide or be ashamed of. He knows that out of all of
the things she has just said to him, this shouldn’t be the one thing that he argues against, the one
thing that he wants to defend himself against. But he can’t stand the thought of Sherlock being just
“a piece of arse on the side”. He can’t stand the thought of the person he loves more than anything
in the world being labelled as nothing more than that. It makes him sick to think about it.

Sherlock isn’t that. He never was.

“You wanted to work this out, so now we’re stuck trying to work this out,” Mary tells him, her
tone haughty. John gets the feeling that if she is going down, she wants to be damn sure she will
do her best to drag John with her. “I won’t let you divorce me for someone else. I’m not just going
to stand around and let you leave me here in this God-forsaken place while you run off to be happy
somewhere else. This was what you wanted, wasn’t it, love?” her words and her tone are mocking, and they make John cringe. “Us, here, together? I’m only giving you what you wanted, John. I thought you would be happy,” she says with a twisted pull of her lips, something that is a mocking rendition of a smile.

John stares at her, so angry he can’t think straight, he can’t even stand the sight of her.

“I’m going to the pub,” he says, turning around and marching towards the door.

“Oh course you are,” Mary calls after him tauntingly. “Go and drink it all better. It’s what you always do, isn’t it? It’s what you’re best at. The only thing you’re really good at, anymore.”

It takes all of John’s resolve to not turn back around and to continue walking out the door.

* * *

John would have loved to go to the pub instead of straight to Sherlock’s house to deal with the child, but his promise to Sherlock to quit drinking is still shiny and new, and John is nothing if not a man of his word. This is a hell of a way to try his fortitude, though. He makes it to Sherlock’s without a single detour, however. He is glad of it, because he thinks that a drink may have just muddled things up and made his thoughts fuzzy, anyways. He has a feeling he is going to need all of his wits about him for this conversation.

The drive to Sherlock’s gives his temper plenty of time to fester, and by the time he is banging on Sherlock’s door he is livid. When Sherlock opens it, John wastes no time barging in. He practically pushes Sherlock out of the way as he charges inside, slamming the door shut behind him and turning on Sherlock, his voice loud and his anger nearly uncontrollable.

“What the fuck were you thinking?” John asks, barely waiting for an answer before he is continuing on. “What possessed you to do that? To go over to my home? To see my wife?”

Sherlock’s voice is nowhere near as loud or uncontrolled as John’s when he answers. “I wanted to meet her,” Sherlock says with an unapologetic shrug of his shoulders, as if he is unconcerned. “I wanted to meet the woman that you keep choosing over me.”

“I’m not choosing her over you. I’ve told you that!” John doesn’t know how long he can stand to have the same argument with Sherlock, over and over again. He’s said these things before, tried to reassure Sherlock, but nothing John tells him will calm Sherlock’s irrational fears about his marriage. So he decides to put a pin in that issue and deal with it later, when he feels like he can handle it better. “And you’ve met her already,” he tries instead. “At the clinic, when you had your blood taken.”

Sherlock just shakes his head, explaining patiently, “That was different. She was working then; I was her patient. I wanted to meet her, John. I wanted to see her make me a cup of tea in the kitchen that you fucked me in, sit in the chair where I sucked your cock, let me into the home that you and she live in.”

John stares at him for a moment and doesn’t know how to respond to that. “Sherlock, that’s…” he trails off, at a loss for words.

“Sad? Depraved? Twisted?” Sherlock offers up. “Yes, possibly.” He doesn’t seem to be bothered by that fact at all. “I’ve told you before, John—I’m not a nice person. I keep telling you, and I keep doing these things that should show you that I’m not a good person. And you see it, for a little while. You get angry at me, and you yell at me, and you tell me that I’m wrong and that I’m
not good for you. But then you forgive me. You always forgive me. Why are you always forgiving me?” he asks, voice frustrated and angry and sharp.

John stares at him, confused for a moment. Because the way it sounds, one would think that Sherlock wants John to leave him, that he wants John to break up with him. One would think that Sherlock has been trying his hardest to push John. To push John away, to push John past his limits. To push John to the edges of his sanity, it would almost seem. Well, if that was his goal, it most certainly has worked. John has been pushed to his limits so many times by Sherlock—because of Sherlock—recently.

And it’s been marvellous.

John had forgotten how it felt, to have his boundaries tested, broken, remoulded. To rediscover himself. John knows that Sherlock has a way of pushing things. He is a master of pushing and pushing things until they break. John knows this personally, because has been broken by Sherlock so many times before. And right now, he thinks that breaking one more time at the hands of Sherlock sounds like the most beautiful way to be shattered.

He makes a move to grab Sherlock, to pull him close roughly and tear into his mouth, to show Sherlock that he’s not the one who gets to make decisions about John’s marriage. When John’s hand closes around Sherlock’s upper arm, though, Sherlock just shakes him off harshly. He steps away and moves to the other side of the room, far from John.

“Don’t,” Sherlock tells him sharply with a decisive shake of his head. “Just, don’t. It always ends up this way, and nothing gets solved.” He indicates the space between them, and John can imagine that he is implying that their discussions always end in sex, no matter what they are trying to resolve, no matter what decision one of them has come to, and in the end they are back to where they started from—hopelessly tangled up in each other in every sense of the word. “This is serious, John. I’m tired of all the hiding, and I’m tired of all of the secrets. I’m tired of being ‘the other person’,” Sherlock whispers to him, voice steady and even. His eyes don’t waver and never once falter from John’s. “I know you want to wait—I know you think that’s the smartest thing. But I just can’t do it anymore. I’m sorry.”

“Oh, John,” John says, taking a deep breath as he licks his lips and tries to stay calm. “Okay. What do you want me to do? I’ll do anything. You know I will. You want me to leave her?” he asks, making an aborted move towards Sherlock, but he stops himself when he sees how tense the other is. “I’ll do it; it’s done, I’ve told you already. Even if,” he stumbles on his words, chokes on them, “even if you want to stop seeing me, I’ll do that, too. Whatever you want, to make you happy, Sherlock. You know that.” John would hate it, and it would kill him, but he has always told himself from the very beginning that if Sherlock didn’t want to see him anymore—truly didn’t want to continue their relationship—John would respect that and stay away from him.

Thankfully, though, Sherlock just shakes his head, and John breathes a silent sigh of relief.

“It’s too late to stop this, John. It was always too late. From the very beginning. We both know that.” He sighs and shrugs, at a loss, and John wants nothing more than to go to him, scoop Sherlock up in his arms and hold him and tell him everything will be okay. He can’t, though, because he doesn’t know if they will be okay. He just doesn’t know anymore.

“But I can see how this—this double life that you’re leading,” Sherlock says, searching for the right words as he looks at John, “is eating away at you, and I hate that I’m doing that to you. I never wanted to be the reason that you were unhappy. I never wanted to make you feel that way. And I know you never meant to make me feel that way, either, but you do. Every time you go home to her, you do. And every time you have to leave me to go back to her, it hurts, like my heart
is shattering inside my chest. And every time it feels that way, you leave and I’m left here alone, with no one and nothing because you’ve taken it all with you.”

John bites his lips together to keep them from trembling, to keep any sounds from falling out of his mouth. He never once wanted Sherlock to feel like that, and John hates himself for making him think that way. John had never wanted things to turn out like this; he had never wanted any of this to happen.

“I thought that I could do it, you know,” Sherlock is suddenly saying into the silence surrounding them, breaking through John’s thoughts. “I thought that I could have you, fuck you, and be okay with it at the end of the day, when you went back home to your wife. But then I learned more about you, John. You gave me more and more of yourself. You showed me all of your wounds, you let me see all of your scars, and I couldn’t do anything except pull you closer, and hope to God that one day you wouldn’t leave me.” He smiles wryly to himself and finally turns away from John, and the man is grateful because he feels like he can breathe again without Sherlock’s piercing gaze drilling a hole through his heart. “But the longer this goes on, the longer you stay married to her and keep promising me things that never end up happening…I feel like I’m losing you.” He shakes his head sadly, his broken smile disappearing from his face. John isn’t sure but he thinks he sees a tear track its way down one cheek in the darkness of Sherlock’s bedroom. “Like I’m losing to her, to your marriage, to the hope that you still cling to for a normal life.”

John opens his mouth to argue. He wants to say something, to protest, to tell Sherlock that he is wrong—of course he is wrong—but Sherlock continues in a rush, cutting John off.

“I’ve been selfish,” Sherlock tells him, voice honest and deep and sorrowful in the stillness that has settled between them. “I realise that now. I’ve been so selfish, and that’s not how you’re supposed to treat someone you love. That just makes me no better than your wife. Maybe…maybe I should finally stop hurting you,” he says with another shrug of his shoulders and a shake of his head. “Maybe without me in your life, you can go back to the way things were before; you can fix your marriage and you can have a house in a nice quiet neighbourhood with a dog and a family. Maybe you can try to make everything better again.”

John finally finds his words, dislodges them from where they are stuck in his throat. “Sherlock,” he croaks out, sadness and despair tinging his voice, “why are you saying this?”

Sherlock looks at him from across the chasm that separates them, his eyes dark with something unsettling. “Because I feel like if I stay, John, I’ll just end up dragging us both into the fire. And that’s not fair to you.”

John goes to him, despite Sherlock’s attempt to move away from him, and grabs his arms, holding him tight and forcing Sherlock to look at him, not letting him slip away again. “Sherlock, look at me. Look at me!” he shouts out, shaking the boy and forcing Sherlock to turn to him. “You’re not the one who is hurting me, all right? I’m doing this to myself, and I’m doing this to you, too. Me and my stupid fucking decisions and my stupid fucking pride. I don’t want a life without you in it. I don’t want things the way they were before I met you. I don’t want to fix my fucking marriage, I don’t want to have a house in a quiet neighbourhood, I don’t want a family with my bitch of a wife, or a fucking dog, or anything else. I’m not leaving you, all right? I’m not going anywhere. There isn’t a single act of God that could possibly keep me away from you,” John tells him vehemently. “Do you understand me? Yeah?”

Sherlock stares at him for a moment, looking right at him, straight through him. John knows he is being deduced, being read, being seen in only the way that Sherlock can see him.

He stands there and lets Sherlock see him.
Sherlock looks at him for only a moment longer before he seems to finally decide that what he is looking at is worthwhile, and then he blushes and John can’t help it anymore. He pulls Sherlock the remaining distance towards him and crushes their lips together in something that can barely be called a kiss. It is demanding and passionate and yeaming and desperate. It is everything that John has ever felt for Sherlock, everything that John has been trying to fight against for so long still, even when he has been telling Sherlock that he hasn’t been. When Sherlock begins to respond against John’s mouth, the man pulls back, panting. He stares at Sherlock in something akin to amazement and confusion, thrown off by the multitude of feelings that he has whenever he is near Sherlock, trying desperately to sort them out.

Every time, a distant part of John’s mind thinks. Every bloody time he wants to be mad at Sherlock, every time he finds good reason to be angry with the boy and argue with him, they end up like this. John doesn’t know how Sherlock manages it. How he manages to make John forget every problem, every reasonable objection he has against something Sherlock has done. How he manages to make them seem irrelevant, even now, after all this time of pulling stunts like this. What John does know, though, is that Sherlock loves him. If there is only one thing in this world that he is certain of, it is that. It might be in an obsessive and slightly disturbing way, but there is absolutely no denying that Sherlock loves him. John actually isn’t quite sure that he has ever been loved by anyone in such an all-consuming way.

He knows that Sherlock isn’t perfect, of course, and that it shows in the way that he loves John. John understands, though, that this doesn’t mean Sherlock loves him any less despite all of the ways that John knows it is possible for Sherlock to be deficient in that category. Sherlock has deeply instilled insecurities and almost non-existent self-worth. It hurts John to know that the most amazing, brilliant being he has ever met holds himself in such low regard. He also knows that it must have taken Sherlock a lot of courage—insecurities and self-esteem issues and all—to tell John what he has told him tonight, to be this open and honest with the man. Sherlock has shown a lot of bravery and courage, and now John has to find his own, for Sherlock’s sake. He wonders, though, how one can adequately address the overwhelming devotion—which borders on an unhealthy co-dependency—he feels to someone who believes John will only want to be with him because Sherlock gives him an escape from his mundane life and some cheap thrills.

John leans forward to kiss him again, and this time it is softer, less urgent. Sherlock surges forward to meet him and the kiss is not so one-sided any longer. John drags him forward, closer, until they are pressing so close to one another that they can feel each other’s heartbeats. John’s mouth against Sherlock’s isn’t demanding or harsh. Instead it is soft and tender, and John kisses him with the kind of sensual pace that John knows can last all night, keeping them both on edge for as long as John wants.

John loves kissing Sherlock; he has always loved kissing Sherlock. He enjoys the feel of Sherlock’s full mouth against his own, the tiny little licks that seem almost self-conscious on Sherlock’s end, and the way that he can sometimes make Sherlock lose his mind just from kissing alone. John loves it all, and now he wants to take his time savouring it.

Sherlock, on the other hand, always gets so desperate when John begins kissing him, as if he just can’t wait a moment longer for what comes next. Against John, he begins to press his hips forward, seeking friction, and John can feel his burgeoning erection against his own hip. Impatient little noises escape his mouth where it is pressed to John’s and the man chuckles softly, carding a hand through Sherlock’s hair.

“Easy, love,” John whispers, dropping his palm to cup Sherlock’s cheek. He slows the pace of their kiss until Sherlock’s hands clench in the front of John’s shirt and his mouth is desperately seeking more of John’s kisses. “Don’t worry, there’s no need to hurry. We have all night long.”
Sherlock keens at the promise of John staying, and John’s heart breaks a little when he sees how easy it is to give Sherlock something that he wants, something that he needs. He’s been selfish, he knows. So selfish, thinking that he could keep everything—his marriage, his wife, Sherlock—and he wants so badly to make it up to Sherlock.

He gives Sherlock another gentle, wet kiss. “I’m going to make you feel so good, baby,” he promises on a murmur. “I’m going to take such good care of you right now.”

Sherlock whimpers at his words and John finally breaks away from his addictive mouth to trail kisses along his jaw line, down to his neck. John turns them around so that he is pushing Sherlock towards the bed, lying him down underneath John and taking his shirt off slowly. Below him, Sherlock spreads himself out and the man buries his face in the bare crook of Sherlock’s neck, breathing him in deeply. Against the material of his own shirt, John can feel his nipples tighten from the scent of Sherlock surrounding him, he can feel his cock twitch in the confines of his trousers. John trails loving hands down Sherlock’s bare torso, relishing the feel of him below John. When John gets to the waistband of his jeans, his fingers play with the button and Sherlock thrusts his hips gently, seeking more friction.

However, John ignores the blatant display that Sherlock is putting on and instead decides to go about this slowly. “Let’s get these off, yeah?” he asks innocently as he fumbles about with the flies.

Sherlock nods his head and allows John to undress him completely, staying quiet and compliant and letting John settle him back down onto the bed while he gently arranges Sherlock’s legs on either side of him. John smiles to himself, knowing that Sherlock secretly loves being cared for, being treated like something fragile and breakable, especially in bed. He loves when John treats him like this, and John loves treating him this way in turn. When John has him completely naked and spread out sinfully below him, he looks down at the vision sprawled across the bed, his breath catching in this throat.

“You’re just as beautiful as the first time I saw you like this,” John informs him, pressing open-mouthed kisses to every piece of Sherlock’s body that he can reach. Then he sits up between Sherlock’s spread legs and hurriedly divests himself of his clothing as well, wanting to feel nothing between them. When he is completely naked, he crawls over Sherlock, lowering his hips so that they meet Sherlock’s and pressing them together, letting their stiffening cocks rub against each other.

“John…” Sherlock gasps as John goes in for another kiss.

“I know, beautiful boy,” John says, kissing down Sherlock’s neck and chest to the flushed skin there. His mouth trails over to Sherlock’s nipple, hard and peaked, and he tries to soothe it with his tongue. “We’ll get there,” John mumbles against Sherlock’s chest, switching to the other nipple and giving it the same attention. “Don’t worry.”

“Want you,” Sherlock moans, panting and squirming against John. “In my mouth.”

He is almost incoherent in his need and desperation, and John can’t help the groan that tears its way out of his throat. He loves Sherlock like this, he loves being the one to make Sherlock like this, and John can’t deny such a tempting request.

“Yeah,” he gasps, thrusting against Sherlock’s hip before he can stop himself. “Yeah, let me just…” He clambers onto his knees awkwardly and moves up the length of Sherlock’s body, straddling his chest and being careful not to put too much of his weight down. His knees sink into the soft mattress just below Sherlock’s armpits, leaving the boy free to use his hands on John as
well as his mouth. Sherlock obediently opens his lips to take John in, so willingly. John groans again as he takes his cock in his hand and guides it towards Sherlock’s mouth.

He sinks into the wet warmth of Sherlock’s mouth and shudders, not able to stop the small thrusting movements of his hips. He can feel his cock pulse and grow against Sherlock’s tongue as the boy rubs it slickly against the underside of John’s prick. John gasps at the amazing sensation and pulls out slightly too far, afraid that he will come already. The head of his cock slips out of Sherlock’s mouth and slides along his lips slickly, catching in one corner and pressing against Sherlock’s cheek. John can feel himself pulse against Sherlock’s soft skin as a swell of precome springs forth. The head of his cock slips along the slickness, spreading it and mixing saliva as well. Sherlock’s tongue darts out to follow John’s cock and the man curses, grabbing himself once again and placing his prick back in Sherlock’s mouth.

“God,” John chokes out. “You’re absolutely perfect, do you know that?” He wipes his thumb through the precome and saliva on Sherlock’s face, spreading it even more and trailing his thumb down close to Sherlock’s lips. Sherlock stretches his mouth wider to take in John’s thumb right next to his cock and a small, pleased hum escapes his throat, sending shocks through John at the vibrations. Watching Sherlock, John can’t help thinking that he is completely filthy and so, so sexy, and he doesn’t know how much longer he can keep from fucking Sherlock’s mouth roughly. John stares at him, completely captivated by the shiny spit and precome on Sherlock’s chin, his eyes drinking in the streaks of the wet mess as it shines dully on Sherlock’s skin.

He pulls out of Sherlock abruptly, fast and sudden, leaving Sherlock wondering where he went, a small sound of confusion bubbling up in his throat. John bends low over Sherlock, using both hands to tilt Sherlock’s face up towards his own, stopping him mid blowjob just to kiss Sherlock’s lips because he is doing such an amazing job and he looks so damn sexy with John’s cock in his mouth. Against the full lips, John can taste himself, the smear of precome leaving behind a salty muskiness, and the taste makes him all the more desperate against Sherlock. Below him, John can feel Sherlock squirming as he tries to part his legs farther, needing to make room for his cock as it swells to full hardness under John’s frantic onslaught. Sherlock continues to squirm, trapped beneath John’s weight, not really thrusting. John slides back slightly so that their groins align once again, giving Sherlock the friction he seeks while John’s mouth drops back to lick once more at his saliva-slick nipples.

“How do you trust me?” John asks, biting gently on the tender nub of flesh and making Sherlock buck.

“Y-yes,” Sherlock cries out, his hands coming up to tangle in John’s short hair, looking for something to steady himself against.

John smiles down at him softly, lovingly. He wants to kiss every inch of Sherlock, spread his legs wide open and put his mouth to the most intimate part of him. He knows that they have just only recently tried rimming and it had seemed like such an intense act for Sherlock, but John can’t help it. He wants to do it again. He wants to open Sherlock up with his lips and his tongue, make Sherlock mad with desire until he is spreading his legs as wide as they will go and tilting his hips towards John’s mouth. He wants to tease Sherlock’s perineum, lick at the soft expanse of skin, part Sherlock’s bollocks with his tongue and his lips until he slowly mouths his way over to Sherlock’s tight hole, opening it up leisurely under his diligent care. He wants to eat Sherlock’s arse until Sherlock doesn’t know how to beg for anything else besides John’s mouth and John’s fingers and John’s cock.

He moves down the bed without a word, sinking lower until his face is over Sherlock’s groin and his hands are pushing the boy’s legs up towards his chest. He places a few well-aimed kisses on Sherlock’s cock, his lips sliding along the hard length until he is licking lightly at Sherlock’s balls
and down to the smooth expanse of his perineum. Sherlock’s leg twitch on either side of John’s head and he gasps. “Oh, fuck,” he mumbles as he feels John’s mouth exploring. “John, are you…?”

“Yeah, I am,” John responds, nibbling at Sherlock’s soft skin. “You look so pretty when I’m sucking your cock, but you’re absolutely fucking gorgeous when I make you flush like this,” John tells him. “You have no idea what I want to do to you. I want to kiss you all over, make you wetter.” Sherlock whimpers at this and John grins against his skin. “I love the sounds that you make, they’re so beautiful,” he says. “You sound even better when my tongue is on you, opening up your arse.” John shows Sherlock just want he means, licking softly at Sherlock’s tight hole and making him cry out.

“God, I love the way you taste,” John mumbles against his skin. “I want my tongue in you. Can I do that, love? Do you want that?”

“Yes, yes please!” Sherlock shouts out, his voice strangled, pulling his legs harder against his chest to open himself up wider for John’s ministrations.

John’s tongue reaches out and ghosts over Sherlock’s entrance, making the boy squirm. He does it again, harder, firmer, dragging his tongue across the puckered skin, tasting all of Sherlock.

“God, I love you like this. I love opening you up, fucking you with my tongue. I love kissing and licking you, making you so wet from my mouth,” John tells him, not pulling his lips away from Sherlock’s body. “And I know you love it, too. I know it makes you crazy. I want you to beg me, Sherlock. I want you to beg me to fuck you.”

Sherlock pushes back against John’s face, rubbing himself against John’s tongue. John lets him, licking at the tight ring of Sherlock’s hole and feeling it flutter and soften, opening slightly under his tongue.

“Are you ready for me, baby? Seems like you are,” he answers himself, lifting his head up from between Sherlock’s arse cheeks and grinning at the teen. “You seem more than ready. Do you want me to fuck you now?”

Sherlock nods his head, beyond words, but John isn’t quite done with him. He wants to continue doing this, he wants to continue fucking Sherlock with his tongue. It is filthy, and yet so intimate and loving. John can imagine that the feel of his tongue in Sherlock is different from his fingers, slick and warm and wet with nothing but spit. Under his mouth, Sherlock is completely open to him now, soft and lax. The only thing hard and straining is his cock, engorged and a purplish-red colour. John takes one more taste of him, pushing his tongue in deep and inhaling through his nose. Sherlock smells of crisp soap and tastes like clean skin, and he moves his hips in frantic thrusts against John’s mouth as the man licks at his rim with hard, wet strokes of his tongue.

“You’re so very good for me,” John says, pulling away from Sherlock’s arse and moving back. “Such a good boy.” John sucks on his own fingers for a moment, wetting them liberally, before he reaches back down and pushes one into Sherlock’s open body.

Sherlock cries out, the sound low and guttural. He shoves his arse backwards, wanting to take John’s finger deep into him. His hips thrust and rotate, and John can feel his own knuckles rubbing all over the slick muscle.

John smiles at Sherlock’s wanton display and moves his finger inside of him, stroking his prostate and making Sherlock cry out again. He slips another finger into Sherlock, and the feel of him is so tight and hot that John can’t wait a second longer; he has to be inside of Sherlock now.
He leans over Sherlock and fumbles with the bottle of lube that is ever ready on Sherlock’s bedside table, spilling the contents over his fingers and wetting his hand. John pushes three fingers into Sherlock for a brief moment, stretching him wide, before he pulls his hand away and strokes himself, slicking his cock.

He lines himself up along Sherlock’s body, the head of his cock resting lightly against the loose entrance of his arse. He wants to go slowly, he really does, but once his cock enters Sherlock, John can’t help it. Sherlock moans and rocks back into him, engulfing him and taking him in almost completely, and John can’t stop from shoving the rest of the way in quickly, burying himself in Sherlock’s warm grip.

“Oh, fuck,” John grits out between clenched teeth. The heat and tightness of Sherlock’s body always surprises him, no matter how many times he’s fucked Sherlock now.

Sherlock gasps at the sudden feel of John bottoming out so quickly inside of him. At the sound, John’s hand comes up to cup his face soothingly. “Shh, relax baby. Just relax.”

Sherlock tries to rock back against him, take him deeper, but John stills him with a hand to his hips. “Easy. Don’t hurt yourself.”

John waits for a moment before he begins thrusting into Sherlock. He doesn’t even withdraw completely, he just moves inside of him, short shallow snaps of his hips because he can’t bear to leave the wet heat and tight comfort of Sherlock’s body for even a moment. Every thrust, every drag of skin on skin is like fire and white hot pleasure shooting through John. As they move together, Sherlock rolling his hips, John can’t believe that he has kept himself from wanting to have this for the rest of his life. He can’t believe he has pushed Sherlock away so many times, kept him at bay, and not given in to his desires to be with Sherlock completely. At the thought, John bites his bottom lip and thrusts harder, his shoulders and his back and his hips all flexing as he pushes harshly into Sherlock’s body, filling him up so completely that he knows Sherlock will never be able to remove or forget him, or ever leave him behind.

Under him, Sherlock is thrusting his hips to meet John’s every move, and the man reaches between them to wrap his fingers around Sherlock’s straining cock. He rolls the foreskin over the flared, red head, and the tiny jerks of Sherlock’s hips turn into harsh thrusts that John knows are pure instinct and have no rational thought behind them. Sherlock makes desperate sounds as he pants and moans, his chest heaving so deeply that John feels the need to sooth him.

“I’ve got you, baby,” he whispers, pressing hot little kisses to Sherlock face, on his cheeks and nose and forehead. “Shh, don’t worry. I’ve got you.”

“Yes, I know. You have me,” Sherlock chokes out, sounding overcome with emotion.

John’s breath hitches at the love and trust in Sherlock’s voice, and he pushes Sherlock’s leg back, hooking it over his shoulder so that he can thrust inside of him more fully. At the deeper penetration, they both gasp. Sherlock’s back arches sharply, trying to take more of John inside of him. At the overwhelming sensation, John’s hands leave Sherlock’s cock and try to grasp desperately at the bedsheets, at Sherlock’s hips, at anything to try to ground himself. Eventually one of John’s hand finds Sherlock’s own by his curly hair, and their fingers entwine tightly.

“Baby, I’m not gonna—” John grits out, unable to even finish his sentence. “I can’t…”

“Yes, me too,” Sherlock whispers against John’s mouth, rolling his hips with every movement from John. “I’m close.”
John groans at the feel of Sherlock working himself towards orgasm under him. “Oh fuck, yeah, I can feel it. I can feel how close you are,” he pants out, his head dropping to Sherlock’s shoulder as his free hand moves back between them and wanks Sherlock against their stomachs. “That’s beautiful, you’re so beautiful. I love you,” John mumbles as he buries his face against the sweat-slicked skin of Sherlock’s neck. He rocks his hips, thrusts harder, and he trembles and gasps for air, his breath rapid and shallow.

John’s fingers wrap tighter around Sherlock’s hard cock, getting a firm grip on the slick flesh, and pumping. “Fuck my hand,” he orders.

Sherlock does, changing up the rhythm of his thrusts to receive pleasure now instead of giving it, the movement of his hips desperate and harsh against John’s groin.

John stretches up, tilting his head back to reach Sherlock’s mouth. “Kiss me,” he tells him, and Sherlock’s head immediately drops to meet his own, his lips opening against John’s. Sherlock’s instant obedience makes John’s head spin, almost overwhelming him in its intensity.

When John mumbles a muffled “Love you,” against his lips one last time, Sherlock loses what little restraint he has and lets the beginning of his orgasm wash over him with a bitten off cry, gasping into John’s mouth.

“Come on, then, gorgeous,” John coaxes as Sherlock’s cock jumps in his hands and dribbles out the first drops of his climax. “Show me.” He pulls away so that he can take in all of Sherlock as the boy comes apart around him.

Sherlock grows completely motionless under him, his whole body tense and rigid with the effort of remaining still as his orgasm crescendos, his cock pumping out streak after streak of thick come against John’s hand and across his belly. All of the little movements and fidgets that are usually such an essential part of him grind to a halt, and all that is left is his heavy breathing mingling with John’s own. He doesn’t move again until Sherlock finishes climaxing, his cock milked of orgasm in John’s hand. As he finishes, he shudders once, hard, and John’s hands move to rub at his sides and thighs softly, caressing him and letting him ride the wave of his orgasm.

“There you are,” John whispers to him gently, coaxing him down. “Steady now, good boy. God, just look at you. Bloody gorgeous.”

When Sherlock is done climaxing, John drags his lips across Sherlock’s throat and to his mouth, kissing him so sweetly and gently that a tightness grows in this throat. He has never believed himself capable of feeling such tenderness and love for someone, but he finds that Sherlock brings it out in him.

“You,” Sherlock says, moving again, pushing himself back on John’s cock with tired huffs of breath. He is winded and flushed, with his eyes shining brightly and his curls damp with sweat. John grows closer to orgasm just looking at him like this, fucked out and still riding his cock like something insatiable. “Now you.”

“Fuck, baby, I’m almost there,” John manages to get out through clenched teeth. He can feel his cock swelling inside of Sherlock with each roll of his hips. Sherlock rubs his hand across John’s belly, smearing his come along the skin and dragging his fingers up John’s chest until he reaches the man’s nipples. His fingertips dance over the tight peak, slicking it with his semen. He reaches back out to grab John’s hand and squeezes when their fingers entwine again, pulling their joined hands back up over Sherlock’s head. John grunts roughly and moves his other hand to find Sherlock’s free one, tangling them together and dragging them up to hold it next to the other, pushing both roughly into the bed and pinning Sherlock down under him. He snaps his hips
forward with deep gasps for air and Sherlock watches him from under dark lashes, his mouth falling open as he breathes heavily.

Still circling his hips, Sherlock leans up and licks along John’s chest, cleaning the mess he made, until he reaches John’s nipple. He takes the nub in his mouth and sucks at it, rolling his hips over John’s groin at the same time, and John is completely lost. He convulses with an unintelligible moan, gripping Sherlock’s hands urgently and fucking into him in a last desperate attempt to bury himself deep. He can feel his cock twitching and pulsing inside the closed heat of Sherlock’s tight passage as his climax burns through him like ice and fire, setting his body on aflame, and he cries out Sherlock’s name as his cock spills inside of him. Sherlock looks up at him, watching him come, and continues to make small little movements with his hips, milking him for all he is worth. He watches, lying underneath the man, as John comes apart, wrung out and whimpering above him.

When his orgasm is done, John doesn’t move, doesn’t breathe, doesn’t even blink for fear that it will dislodge him from the perfect feel of Sherlock’s body. They are incandescent, unified, lost in the moment, and John doesn’t ever want to be found again. Sherlock breaks the spell, though, by pulling his head away from John’s chest and bringing their mouths together. John can taste Sherlock’s unique flavour on the boy’s lips, and he whimpers into the kiss, letting Sherlock shuffle and fidget underneath him. Sherlock wiggles out from beneath John and lies contently beside him, a complete mess as usual in the post-orgasmic haze of their lovemaking. Next to him, Sherlock’s arms automatically try to fit around John’s body, keeping him close. His arms circle around John while his hands roam over every part of the man that they can touch: his back, his shoulders, into his hair. Sherlock moves to rest his head on John’s chest and they pant heavily in sync with one another and tremble in each other’s arms. John nuzzles him back, digging his nose into Sherlock’s hair and murmuring sleepy little half-words for some time. Sherlock’s hands stop their wandering and settle over John’s heart, feeling the erratic beating of it slowly settle down until it is normal again.

John wraps his arms tighter around Sherlock and keeps him close, pulling him until Sherlock is almost lying on top of him. His fingertips trace lazily across Sherlock’s back and hips, and he turns his head every so often to press sleepy kisses along Sherlock’s face and into his sweaty hair. As much as John loves fucking Sherlock, he thinks he may like this part better; afterwards, when their limbs are sticky and tangled in each other, their bodies heavy with pleasure and their hearts beating in time right next to each other’s.

The love John feels for Sherlock burns bright and hot in his chest. The human heart isn’t meant to feel all of this at once, he thinks to himself as he noses ticklishly against Sherlock’s skin, up and down his neck in a way that makes Sherlock squirm and protest. Yet here is Sherlock, brilliantly intelligent, amazingly gorgeous, and, most importantly, completely his. John thinks he might die from the joy and the love that he feels for Sherlock at this moment. John loves everything about him. All of the mad, contradictory, awkward, infuriating, annoying, and vulnerable things about him. He is filled with so much love and affection, in fact, that he can’t help but drag Sherlock’s face to his by the boy’s neck and press their mouths together messily in order to try to show him.

When John feels that he can finally release him, they part. They are winded and both sporting soppy grins plastered on their faces, but they hardly care.

“Were you serious about the dog?” Sherlock asks, voice breathless with happiness as they settle back into one another under the bedsheets, arms wrapping around shoulders and bodies to find the right spots to fit into. “Because I might want a dog.” There is a wide smile on his face that makes him look his age, like he doesn’t have a care in the world, and a light in his eyes that makes them sparkle in John’s mind. Of course, John’s always been partial to Sherlock’s eyes, so he may be a
John laughs, forgoing getting comfortable and rolling over so he is halfway on top of Sherlock again, his sweaty body covering Sherlock’s own and their legs tangling together. “If you want a dog, I’ll get you a dog, love,” he says, giving Sherlock a kiss on the nose that trails down to his lips. “I’ll get you a puppy. A whole litter of puppies. Anything you want, Sherlock, I’ll give you. Always.” His light tone turns serious, and the playful pecks turn into deeper kisses, meaningful in their promise. “I’m going to take care of you. When we’re finally able to be together, I’ll take such good care of you,” John promises as he seals the words against Sherlock’s lips. “You’ll see. I’ll try harder than I did with Mary, I promise. And I’ll do better than I’m doing now.” He pulls back incrementally to look Sherlock in the eye. “I’m trying to be a good man, Sherlock, but for you, I want to be better than I ever have been before in my life.” John pulls farther away, so that he can more fully look Sherlock in the eyes. Their noses brush together and their breaths meet in the infinitesimal space between their faces. They are still so close that all John has to do is whisper to be heard, a barely-there brush of his lips against Sherlock’s own. “I want to be a great man. I’ve done some terrible things in my life. In the war, and in my marriage, and to people that I’ve loved. But you make it all better. You wash it all away. I feel like I can start over and make something good of my life with you. Good of myself. I want to become the best man that I possibly can be, because I know that’s how you see me, and I don’t want to disappoint you.”

“John,” Sherlock whispers back, staring at him, a lost look coming over his face. He reaches out for John, wrapping fingers and hands and arms desperately around the man, as if he is afraid to let him go again, afraid that John and this moment aren’t real. John lets Sherlock cling to him, and he clings back, because he is actually afraid of the exact same thing.

Sherlock kisses him deeply, trying to steal the very breath from his lungs. “You could never disappoint me, you know,” he says when he pulls away from John, voice soft and hushed.

John frowns at that, a tightness growing in his throat. “I already have,” he answers sadly, upset that he can’t give Sherlock a different response. “And I’m sorry, love. You may think that you’re not a good person, but it’s really me who is the shit one. I’m so sorry.”

Sherlock just smiles against John’s lips, though. “It’s not our fault that we’re both a little shit at all of this. We’re very similar, John. My heart is just like yours. Just as broken, just as crippled, just as burned. But you have it,” he tells John on a whisper, rubbing his nose against the man’s. “You have all of it. You always have.”

John doesn’t think he will ever stop being amazed by the chameleon quality of Sherlock’s eyes as he stares at them. Under the low light of Sherlock’s bedside lamp, they are the most stunning shade of cornflower blue with hints of hazel streaking through that John can clearly see this close to them. The little speckles in them that make them so off-putting for some people are more apparent this close and John wants to place soft kisses on each of Sherlock’s eyelids, so he does. He is overcome with emotion from Sherlock’s words for a moment, and uses the opportunity while his lips are occupied to pull himself together. It’s a rather intense feeling, knowing you hold someone’s heart completely in your hands.

“I love you,” John ends up whispering against Sherlock’s forehead, because he finally decides that nothing other than the simplest truth will suffice in a moment like this. His hand slips up to rest between them, over Sherlock’s heart, which the boy believes is so battered and bruised. “I love you so much.”

John knows he will never give Sherlock up, not for any of those things that Sherlock wants him to have. At this point, John might not even be able to give him up if it is Sherlock saying that it is
what he wants. John has never known a love like this in the entire 35 years of his life, and he knows that there are very few people out there who can claim that they have ever experienced anything like it; what he and Sherlock share is a love that is fire-tested, a love that is unbreakable and unconditional.

“I’m not going anywhere, Sherlock,” John tells him, because he feels like it has to be said again, like Sherlock needs to hear it over and over and over again or else he’ll forget. “I’m not going to end up choosing her. I’ve already made my choice. We just have to wait a little while longer, love, for you to finish your A-Levels. But you don’t have to worry about me leaving you. I could never do that. I could never have this with someone else. I love you. You saved me, Sherlock,” John tells him again, hugging him tighter. “You don’t even know how you’ve saved me.”

He curls up closer around Sherlock because he wants to feel Sherlock’s warm skin after everything that has happened today, he wants to be comforted by Sherlock’s hands and Sherlock’s touch and Sherlock’s heat and Sherlock’s mouth. He wants to find that sense of oblivion, that sense of peace that comes from being with Sherlock, from getting lost in that long, beautiful body. Because he knows that Sherlock can make miracles happen, and he hopes that Sherlock can deduce what’s in his heart, and he feels like Sherlock can rewrite history, which is what he wants desperately right now. To go back to a time before Mary and simply wait for Sherlock. Wait and wait and wait. He would wait forever for Sherlock.

“We saved each other, John,” Sherlock whispers into the crook of his arms, voice soft and sleepy as he drifts off while he is pressed against John’s strong chest.

Yes, John thinks, we did. John knows this. He knows that he has saved Sherlock from the edge of despair just as much as Sherlock has saved him. But Sherlock is still teetering on the brink, in danger of tipping over, because John isn’t there for him the way that Sherlock needs him to be, the way that John promised he would be.

They did save each other. And now John knows that he has to save Sherlock again, hopefully for the last time.

John knows that he made the decision to stay married right now because it is the smartest, safest one for them, but it is also the most painful, and John knows he can’t continue on the path that he chose any longer, to stay married until the end of the school year. He can’t keep hurting Sherlock, or himself, like this while they do nothing but wait. John can’t do that to Sherlock any longer. Not when John loves him so much.

So the answer is quite simple, really:

He won’t.
You Burn Like a Fire Inside

Chapter Notes

Brit-picked by Indelible_Ink. Beta’d by iriswallpaper and beautifully_in_pain. Song inspirations for this chapter are "A Rush of Blood to the Head" by Coldplay, "Angel with a Shotgun" by The Cab, "You Bring to Life" by We As Human & "Story of my Life" by One Direction. Chapter title is taken from the song "Bring to Life"

Here it is: the last chapter! I would just like to thank everyone who has read, commented, left kudos, made fanart for me, and just plain enjoyed this story! It means so much to me. I would also like to add that fanart has been made by darkestbliss, and I have also linked to cover art that I made. Both of these links are back in the first chapter, in the notes section. One more thing: I switched all of the links to the pictures in this story to my new tumblr, which is NSFW. If you would like to check it out, you can get there through any pic in this story, now. Be warned, it is definitely NSFW and there are lots of post that deal with daddy kink ;-)

Speaking of daddy kink, this may be the last chapter of "The Burning LIfe", but you haven't seen the last of the spin offs. The next one will be posted soon, and it has dovetailed with the timeline for "TBL". The spin offs that come after that will be posted in chronological order. If you are reading those, I hope you find the rest of the posts enjoyable!

The decision to finally divorce his wife is a frightening one, even if it is the most obvious and simple one. John lets it fester for only about a day before realising that he actually has to do something about it now, and so he sets a plan in motion. He knows what he has to do in order to begin his life with Sherlock: leave his wife, to start with, and speak with Mycroft, since he is the only person in Sherlock’s life who has put forth any effort to take care of him, other than John. However, those things seem terrifyingly significant at the moment, and for a second John almost wants to change his mind.

He mentally kicks himself, calling himself a hundred kinds of idiot.

Looking back on the last few months, he can definitely say that he’s been the worst kind of coward. Nothing but a stupid, bloody coward. He knows now, though, that if love is a fight then he is going to die with his heart on the trigger of a gun. He would do that for Sherlock. He would do anything for Sherlock.

He’s not afraid any longer. He’s not afraid of anything now, not when Sherlock burns like a fire inside of him, reminding him that this is the right thing to do. Sherlock has given John something to want to fight for. And he will fight for Sherlock, for as long as he needs to, damn the consequences.

Right now, John knows what he has to do, who he has to turn to for assistance in this predicament. The only other person who could possibly help him keep Sherlock safe, who could possibly help him care for Sherlock. The only other person who has been taking care of Sherlock during the boy’s short life, whether Sherlock believes it or not. Sherlock may claim to be an adult, and legally he might be able to do certain things on his own, but John is a realist—he knows that Sherlock still
has to sit his A-Levels, and he has to be accepted to university, and he has to have money to continue his education. John can’t possibly support Sherlock and give him everything that he needs.

But Mycroft can.

John has heard the saying “If you’re going to go to war, you better know what it is that you’re fighting for.”

Sherlock is everything to him. Everything. And John will do everything, anything, to make sure that Sherlock is taken care of, looked after, happy. Even if that means setting aside his pride and going to Mycroft Holmes to ask for his help. If it means that Sherlock will finally be happy, will finally know how much John loves him, then John will fight that battle for him. John will be the soldier in that war. He has fought worse enemies and lived to tell the tales. He knows that Mycroft will not approve of what John is going to propose, of the direction John wants to steer Sherlock’s life in.

John doesn’t care, though.

John will fight with everything he has for Sherlock, until he’s won the war for them. John will throw away everything he has for Sherlock, everything he is—his morals, his reason, his sense, his life, his marriage, his career. He doesn’t care anymore. He doesn’t care if he has nothing left of himself at the end, if there is nothing left to redeem himself with. Sherlock is all that he needs, Sherlock’s love is the only redemption he craves. Sherlock is everything.

He’s been surviving this life, he realises. Merely surviving. He’s spent all of his years this way, but especially since he has been back from Afghanistan. Just surviving, day to day. Ever since meeting Sherlock, though, his life has been so much more than that. He’s been living. And he wants to continue living. With Sherlock. For the rest of his life.

So he prepares to go to battle with Mycroft Holmes.

But first, he has to pick up a few things.

*

He wonders briefly how one gets a hold of the British Government. He is more than sure that Mycroft Holmes is probably not listed on Parliament’s directory. It wouldn’t be so simple.

John opens up his call log and goes back through his list of calls (mostly Sherlock, slightly less from Mary, and then Mike and Harry in descending order) until he comes across the only blocked number in his log in the recent months. He knows it is pointless to try, but he dials it anyways.

Just as he expected, the machine-operated voice on the other end of the line tells him it was a stupid idea.

He slumps in his chair in his sitting room and sighs heavily, dropping his phone to his lap and putting his face in his hands. He doesn’t know what he is going to do. If he can’t get a hold of Mycroft, then all of this is pointle—

His thought gets cut off as his mobile rings, the sound shrill in the early-evening silence of his home. He answers it before Mary can hear it, heart jumping into his throat at the sight of the “BLOCKED NUMBER” written across his screen.

“Hello?” he says, voice tight and high.
“Dr. Watson?” a female voice answers. John doesn’t remember exactly what Mycroft personal assistant sounded like, but he thinks it might be her.

“Yes.” He licks his lips nervously, waiting for her to respond.

“Would you like us to send a car to pick you up?”

Butterflies erupt in his stomach and threaten to make him nauseous. This is almost too easy. “Yes, that would be wonderful.”

“The car will be at your home shortly,” she says crisply. “Goodbye.”

“Wait,” John hurries to get in before she rings off. “Don’t you need my address?”

There is a moment of silent pause on the other end of the line, where John can hear nothing. Then, in a tone that sounds as if she is holding back a smile, “The car will be at your home shortly.”

*

If John thought it was slightly creepy to have a Bond-esque black sedan silently pull up outside of his house late in the evening to whisk him away to a secret meeting with a mysterious man, it is nothing compared to the disturbing locations that Mycroft Holmes insists they meet at.

The car takes him to another abandoned warehouse, this one smelling damply of mould and old paper. John gets out of the car armed only with his nerves and a small flash drive in the pocket of his jacket, where it feels like it is burning a hole through his clothing. Mycroft is standing in the light of the car, much the same as he was the first time John met him, illuminated against the dusky sky of an early sunset. He looks impeccably dressed in what must be a bespoke suit, and it may just be a trick of his mind but John thinks that Mycroft looks increasingly intimidating the closer John gets to him. John steels his resolve, though, and forges ahead. He won’t back out of this now, just because Sherlock’s big brother is some sort of government hot-shot who probably has the ability to disappear him from existence.

John clears his throat as he stops in front of the other man, standing as tall as he can and raising his chin.

Mycroft smiles back at him, a small, sly little turn of his lips. “To what do I owe this pleasure, Dr. Watson?” he asks, tone too pleasant.

John clears his throat and squares his shoulders, preparing for the fight. “I wanted to talk to you about Sherlock.”

“What about him?” Mycroft questions, raising a single eyebrow. John figures that Mycroft must know Sherlock is the only thing that John would come to Mycroft for, but he’s not sure if Mycroft expects the conversation to head in the direction John will take it in. Mycroft probably thinks that John is never going to make a decision regarding his marriage or his relationship with Sherlock.

Well, at least he’ll have the element of surprise, he figures.

“First off, I think you should know that he’s not faking any of the things you think he is,” John begins with, right out of the gate. He thinks it is important that Mycroft knows this, and understands. “Here, look at this.” He reaches into his jacket pocket and pulls out the flash drive, holding it out to Mycroft. The man frowns at it before reaching out to take it from John, looking at it for a moment before holding a hand silently out behind him. Like a ghost, Anthea appears from the shadows with a small, thin laptop. Mycroft inserts the flash drive without a word and opens it,
his face impassive as he reads, showing no indication of what he is seeing.

John knows what he is reading, though. He wasn’t able to pull Sherlock’s entire medical file onto the drive, because the hospital didn’t have it all, but there was enough information in front of Mycroft now for John’s purposes.

It is a terrible breach of confidentiality and it goes against all of his ethics as a doctor and as Sherlock’s lover, he knows, but John hardly even feels badly about it. He is more than sure that Mycroft himself could have gotten a hold of Sherlock’s file to have a look at it on his own, if the mood to see if his baby brother was indeed telling the truth ever struck him.

John knows, though, that Mycroft never had.

So if John has to break every moral code he has as a doctor just to be sure that he can keep Sherlock safe, he won’t hesitate to do it again and again and again.

“You left him here, Mycroft,” John says into the empty stillness around the two men as Mycroft continues to silently read the file on his laptop, his eyes never once leaving the screen. “In this mess. You know that it’s not right.”

“What would you have me do, John?” Mycroft asks suddenly, sighing heavily. He looks up at John and in the bright light of the computer screen he looks twice his age, weary and sorrowful, and his voice matches. “He won’t let me take care of him. You know he won’t allow that.”

John takes a breath, holds it in, and clenches his fist. “Let me take him,” he says softly. He is afraid the words are too soft, but he knows that Mycroft has heard him when the man’s shoulders stiffen in his bespoke suit.

“Take him where, exactly?” Mycroft asks carefully, his eyes narrowing dangerously.

“To London,” John answers immediately with a decisive nod of his head. “You can enroll him in another school, let him finish out his year. He’ll sit his A-Levels, and then he’ll go to university in the city. I’ll go back to work as a GP, find a clinic in London that will take me. We’ll sort it out.”

Mycroft smiles, but the gesture isn’t friendly. He shows too many teeth and he doesn’t let it reach his eyes. “Need I remind you, Dr. Watson, that you’re married?” He speaks slowly, as if John is an idiot who needs reminding of that particular fact.

John flushes, the shame threatening to bubble up and choke him. “Not for long,” he informs Mycroft definitively. He hates that he has to speak to the man about this matter, but if that is what it takes for Mycroft to agree to allow John to take Sherlock, then it is a small price to pay. “I’ll file for divorce as soon as I can. I should have done it long ago, I know, but…I’ve been an idiot,” John admits readily. “But it doesn’t matter anymore because I want to make this right. I want to make him happy and I want to be sure that he is taken care of. And I know you want that as well,” he says, the statement coming out more like an accusation.

Mycroft doesn’t argue with him on that fact, he simply snaps the laptop shut with a sharp click and tucks the small device under his arm, safely out of the way. He fixes John with a stare that is much like his brother’s: intent and penetrating, reading John the way only one other person has ever read him.

“He gets bored,” Mycroft says suddenly into the silence that surrounds them. “A mind like his, it is unappeasable. He is always bored. That’s why he tries so hard to find something in his life to stimulate himself.” The two men continue to stare at one another, sizing each other up. “He’s an
addict,” the elder Holmes continues, and his tone is amicable, like he is talking about something inconsequential over afternoon tea. “He will always be an addict. But what he’s really addicted to, Dr. Watson, is risk. He’ll do anything, anything at all, to stop being bored. To feel that thrill. What do you think is going to happen once there is no more risk involved in being with you?” Mycroft asks, raising his eyebrows. “Once the excitement has gone out of it? Do you honestly think he’s going to stick around?”

John doesn’t even hesitate.

“Yeah, I do.”

“You sound so sure of yourself,” Mycroft responds, his tone soft and full of regret, as if he is talking to someone who is about to get their heart broken and doesn’t know it yet. “So sure of him.”

John chooses to ignore his tone, though. Instead, he squares his shoulders and lifts his chin, clenching his fists. “I am,” he answers steadily.

A small smile graces the corner of Mycroft’s mouth. “Interesting.”

“What is?” John tries not to think about how much the man standing before him reminds him of Sherlock.

“You are,” Mycroft answers immediately, inclining his head towards John. “I think it is very possible that you might just be the making of my brother.” He pauses and cocks his head to one side, contemplating John for only a moment before finishing, “Or you might make him worse than ever.”

John doesn’t know what to say to that. What he does know, though, is that Mycroft hasn’t given him an answer.

“So will you let me take him to London?”

Instead of answering him, Mycroft narrows his eyes at the man standing at parade rest across from him and responds back with, “Why are you willing to risk so much for him, John?”

John opens his mouth to answer with some smart-arse comment, tired of being yanked around by Mycroft, but what comes out instead is the honest truth. “Because he’s worth it, Mycroft. He’s worth all of this and so much more. Only no one’s ever showed him that before.”

His answer seems to surprise the elder Holmes, who might have never thought that his little brother was anyone who was worth saving, who was worth risking anything for. He stares at John for a long moment, that blank look on his face which John knows means that he has shocked a Holmes into silence.

“I’ve never found anything worth fighting for until I found him, Mycroft,” John says into the thick silence that surrounds them. “Please, let me take him. I know I’ve fucked up in the past, but I’ve promised him that I’ll do better. I’ll have to do better, because I can’t lose him.”

He stares at Mycroft Holmes and waits.

Mycroft looks at him for a moment longer before opening his mouth to give John his answer.

*
John walks into his house that night like he is preparing to go into a firefight.

The house is dark except where the light is on in the few rooms that Mary is occupying this late at night, keeping everything around him in shadows as he enters their home.

He walks down the entryway and towards the kitchen where he can hear her, making a racket with the kettle. She is having her nightly cup of tea. She never could go to bed without one last cup. He smiles at the thought as he walks down the hallway lined with photographs. Photographs of them, of their wedding, of their family. It all seems strange, like stories out of a storybook that he read about and remembered fondly, but didn’t actually live through. He knows he should feel guilty about it, but he just hasn’t been able to make himself care in so long. Even this house—which was meant to be their home, where he had hoped they could start their lives over and begin their family—feels empty and hollow to him. Empty and hollow like the photographs surrounding him, like the place in his heart where his love for his wife should be.

As John walks down the hallway to their kitchen, he finally understands that some things in life fall apart so that other things can fall together. He can see that now. His marriage is over, and so is that part of his life, but he has Sherlock now. And he wouldn’t trade it for all the world.

The light in their kitchen is bright after the darkness of the rest of the house, and John stops in the doorway to watch Mary as she goes about making her cuppa, taking no notice of him.

“Hi,” he says to her back when it is clear that she isn’t going to turn around any time soon.

She makes a noncommittal noise low in her throat, pretending to stir sugar into her tea though it must have surely dissolved by now.

“Listen,” John sighs heavily, running a hand through his hair and making a mess of it. He is tired. So tired. He doesn’t want to be having this conversation, but he knows that there is no stopping it now. She needs to know the truth of it all. She deserves to know, after everything that John has done the past few months. He owes her that much, at least. “I think we should talk.”

That makes her turn, looking at him with large, sorrowful eyes. She must know what’s coming, she’s not an idiot. Yet here she stands, quiet for once, letting John have control of the situation.

He doesn’t know where to start, but he figures apologising for the mess he has made is as good a place as any.

He sighs and begins, voice unsure and hesitant as he stumbles over his words. “I—I’ve made a shambles of everything. You were right, I never should have made us move here, I never should have made you stay with me,” he says in a rush. Then he takes a deep breath and continues. “But I was scared. I was scared of losing the only thing that I’d ever known. I can see now, though, that it was the worst decision I could have made. I should have just granted you the divorce a long time ago.” He shakes his head, a helpless gesture. “I’m sorry that I didn’t. But we obviously can’t stay together like this. I see that now. So…” he inhales deeply, finding the fortitude for what he wants to say. “I’m leaving, Mary. I’ll get everything sorted and make sure that the papers for the house are transferred over to your name. I’ll take care of everything. I just can’t do this anymore. I don’t want to.”

At his decision, Mary’s eyes go wide and she stares at him blankly. She is quiet for a long moment, her hands completely still on her forgotten cup of tea, before she frowns at him. “You think I care about any of that, John? About the house or all of that legal nonsense?” she asks, voice incredulous. “For fuck’s sake! You can’t just take me out of London, uproot my life, and then decide to leave when it’s convenient for you!”
John winces at her words, at her accusations. She is right, of course. He had made her leave her home, her friends, her job, the life that they had made for themselves in London, and he had kept her from being happy. He knows that it is unfair of him to be the only one to make the decision to end it, when she has been pleading with him for years and he has refused all of this time. He has taken so much from her, and there is no way for him to give it back. The things that they’ve said and done have left permanent scars on each other. There are some things that just can’t be fixed now, and he knows this.

“You may not believe me,” he tells her, voice soft and meant to be soothing, placating, “but I gave you all that I had.” He thinks that it is important that she know this. He realises that it won’t make much of a difference to her now, but he still wants her to know. None of what he did was done out of spite or malice. He really thought that he was doing the best thing for them, he really believed that things would get better after they left London. “I’m sorry that it wasn’t enough. I see it now. I didn’t back then, and that’s unforgivable. I’m so sorry.”

Mary shakes her head, rejecting his apology. “Do you think ‘sorry’ makes it all better, John? Do you think all you need to do is apologise and everything is right again?”

He stares at her silently from across the kitchen and thinks about how cold she is compared to Sherlock, compared to his blazing heat and burning passion for life. He thinks about how he would have done anything when they first moved here to make her feel even just a little bit of that kind of warmth. But not any longer.

“I don’t want things to be right again, Mary,” he says with a heavy sigh. “I’m done pretending. I’m just so tired of it.” He lifts his chin when he speaks, sure of his words and the weight that they carry. He may be tired, and Mary may have broken a part of him, but there is still a piece of him left whole, left untouched by her bitterness and her resentment. There is still a part of his heart that is wholly Sherlock’s.

As he stands there in front of her, in the kitchen that they have shared for little less than a year, the kitchen where he had taken Sherlock not so very long ago, he realises that it doesn’t matter any longer. Nothing that he says to Mary matters, and neither does anything that she says back, because he is leaving tonight. Leaving with Sherlock, leaving to a place where they won’t have to hide anymore, leaving to a place where nothing can reach them.

“I’m going to pack up some things. I’m going back to London,” he tells her gently. He turns to exit the kitchen and make his way towards the staircase, when her voice stops him in his tracks.

“To London, with your little teacher’s aide?” she sneers, voice cold and mocking.

Fed up with all of the lies, John can’t stop himself from turning around and shouting, “No, not with my bloody teacher’s aide! There is no fucking teacher’s aide, Mary!”

Mary stares at him for a moment, surprised by this turn of events. Almost instantly, though, John can see her thoughts morph into a second theory, this one much more dangerous. “Oh, God. I’ve been such an idiot, this whole time,” she breathes out, a look of understanding dawning across her face. “It’s that boy, isn’t it?” she asks, her tone emotionless with shock. “Your student, the one who came over that day and talked to me. He was also the one who called you in the middle of the night that time, wasn’t he?” Her tone implies that John doesn’t need to answer, because she already knows. John can’t hide the wince that pinches at his face. He was stupid to think that he would get through this without her putting two and two together. A fucking idiot. “Oh, John,” she says, her voice cracking. “How could you?”

He ignores her, rushing up the stairs in an effort to get away from her and her accusations, to get
away from any probing questions she might have. She follows him up, though, trailing behind him into their bedroom and watching as he digs through his closet for his largest Army duffle. When he finds it, he begins to fill it with whatever clean clothes he can see, taking a few bare essentials from around the room and the loo along as well. Mary stands in the doorway the entire time and watches him silently. He turns his back to her as he opens the drawer of his bedside table, grabbing up what he needs from inside and turning around so that he can place the cold, solid metal inside his jeans at the small of his back. When he has everything that he thinks he needs, he moves to exit the room, brushing past her without a word. She continues to silently follow him to the front door.

He thinks that the worst of it is over, that he will be able to leave without any more guilt or sorrow, but as he reaches for the door Mary finally speaks.

“John, I…I’m going—I have to…what you’re doing isn’t right.” Her voice cracks with unshed tears and disappointment.

John stops, hand on the door, so close to walking out. He sighs, and his stomach clenches because he knows exactly what she thinks she has to do. It was the reason he was so scared of anyone finding out about Sherlock. He takes a deep breath, unworried now after his talk with Mycroft. The elder Holmes had given his word that he would do what he could for John and Sherlock’s unique situation, to help his little brother and finally do something to take care of Sherlock. At this moment, John knows that Mycroft almost certainly has put surveillance on Mary’s mobile and will be intercepting any call she makes. He basks in the moment of safety and security and his hand grips the doorknob.

“You do what you have to, Mary,” he says, tone cold and steely.

Looking at her now, though, unable to say the words without even a small amount of conviction, he knows that she won’t. She never wanted to hurt him that much, he is certain of that.

Behind him, her voice is soft and broken in the quiet of the house. “This isn’t you, John. Everything that you’re doing, it’s not like you at all.”

“It is me,” he says, finally opening their front door and stepping outside. “I just never knew it before him.”

He shuts the door behind him softly, being sure to lock it. He’ll send the key back in the post, though he’s sure she’ll want to change the locks. It doesn’t matter to him. He smiles widely as he walks down the drive, his largest Army duffle over his good shoulder, and heads towards the car that is waiting at the end of his drive, on loan from Mycroft until John gets to his destination. He honestly can’t remember a time that he has ever felt better in his life. His gun is a body-warm, heavy weight pressed against the small of his back and his duffle is stuffed so full of his clothes and belongings it is almost bursting. The fire beneath his feet is burning ever brighter, and John knows it is almost done. He is almost able to finally call Sherlock his. No more hiding, no more waiting.

He gets into the car and puts the key in the ignition, shifting into drive and heading towards Sherlock’s house.

He is close now.

*  

John pounds on Sherlock’s front door until it opens, Sherlock glaring at the person who dared disturb him during the middle of the night. It seems that John has caught him on one of his rare
“John?” he asks drowsily, frown melting right off of his face once he recognises the midnight visitor.

John doesn’t waste any time with “hello’s” or kisses and just shoves his way inside, past Sherlock. “Where is he?” John asks, turning around inside of the entryway and facing Sherlock.

“What?” Sherlock asks, confused but closing the door. “Who? What are you doing here?”

“Your father. Is he here?” John asks even though he knows the answer. He saw it for himself when he pulled into the drive, an older model brown sedan which he has never seen at Sherlock’s house before. He knew it could only mean one thing, and he was increasingly thankful for the solid, cold weight of metal pressing against the small of his back.

Sherlock, though, just nods his head, still too sleep addled to understand. “He stumbled in about two hours ago and made it as far as the sofa before he passed out.”

John nods his head once, steeling his resolve and squaring his shoulders. “Right, then.” He reaches out to grab Sherlock by the shoulders, turning the teen to face him straight on. “Go to your room and pack your stuff, Sherlock—whatever you don’t want to leave behind,” he tells him. “Don’t come back out until I call you.”

Sherlock just frowns at him. “John, what—?”

“We’re leaving.” John says, stomach tightening and fluttering in anticipation and nervous excitement. “Tonight. Together. I know I’ve made some mistakes, Sherlock. Well, I’ve made lots of mistakes,” he amends, shaking his head as he thinks about all of the stupid, foolish things he’s done over the time he’s been with Sherlock. All of the time he’s wasted and how often he’s hurt Sherlock’s feelings. “But I promised you I would make it up to you, and I promised you I would keep you safe. And I’m finally going to keep those promises, if I haven’t ruined everything already. Have I?” he asks, running one hand up along Sherlock’s shoulder and over to his face to gently grab his chin, tilting his head so that John could better look him in the eyes. “Will you come with me?”

Sherlock takes a moment to stare at John, really look at him. His brow furrows in confusion, the small knot forming in the centre of his thick eyebrows that he gets when he is trying to suss out a particularly hard problem. “Of course,” he finally answers after a small eternity, voice soft and quiet. “I’ll go anywhere with you. You know that.”

John’s smile could burn away the sun. “Good. Now your father and I…we’re going to have a little chat. Man to man. Go on into your room and don’t come back out until I call you. Swear to me,” John stresses, voice going hard, “no matter what you hear.”

Sherlock’s eyes widen imperceptibly and he draws a shaky breath. “I swear, John.”

“That’s my boy.” He reaches a hand out to thread his fingers through the hair at the base of Sherlock’s skull and pulls Sherlock towards him, kissing him tenderly, the act full of silent assurances. “Everything’s going to be better after tonight. Just like I promised you. Go on, now.”

Sherlock stares at him for a moment, stunned silent, before he licks his lips, tasting the lingering traces of their kiss, and then nods his head slightly and turns around. He makes his way back to his
bedroom with only the smallest glance over his shoulder at John before he disappears, leaving the man alone in the entryway as he leans back against the front door, feeling the heavy wood press against his shoulders.

In the cover of darkness around him, John pulls his gun out of the small of his back where it is tucked into the waistband of his trousers and holds it up in front of him with soldier-steady hands. It is empty—he had unloaded the magazine and press-checked the gun several times, dry firing it just to be sure, as well—but there is no need for anyone but him to know that. He leaves it uncocked for now, so that he can pull the hammer back when he needs to, just for added effect. Even without bullets, though, the weight of it is solid and heavy in his hand, and he knows it will work perfectly for what he wants to use it for tonight.

He just hopes that the shouts from across the house and the pained cries from Sherlock’s father as John beats the man don’t worry the boy too much.

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The air inside of the car is thick with things unsaid. Sherlock keeps throwing small glances in his direction as John turns the car on and shifts it into gear, pulling away from Sherlock’s house. John’s knuckles are bruised and bloodied where they grip the steering wheel and the gun is digging into his back uncomfortably as he sits in the driver’s seat, the metal still warm from his hands.

Sherlock opens his mouth to say something, but then thinks better of it.

John tries not to smile, but he can’t really help it. He feels giddy, like a child, knowing that he is on his way to London with Sherlock, towards a new life together. When Sherlock opens his mouth to say something a second time but only ends up frowning in confusion, John takes pity on him and decides to speak instead.

“You think that flat in central London is still available?” he asks casually, casting a sidelong glance at Sherlock out of the corner of his eye.

Sherlock smiles at that, the movement of his lips slow and easy. “I’m sure Mrs. Hudson has kept it open for me.”

They sit in silence for a little while as John gets onto the motorway and turns towards London. Sherlock is visibly buzzing in his seat, moving restlessly like an excited puppy, and it seems that he can’t contain the words he has been holding back any longer.

“Are we really doing this, John?” he asks, voice breathy and full of wonder. “Truly?”

It worries John that Sherlock thinks he could be lying about something like this. John doesn’t want Sherlock to think that any of this is fake, or some sort of joke. He wants Sherlock to know that this is most definitely happening. “Of course, love. Of course we’re really doing this. I wouldn’t tease you about something like this.”

Sherlock bites his lip before asking, in a small voice, “You’ve left her, then? For good?”

John doesn’t answer him, he just reaches one hand out to card his fingers through Sherlock’s hair, dipping down to cup his cheek. He spares him a quick glance before turning his eyes back to the road. It is answer enough for Sherlock.

“It may not be easy, and I’m sure we’ve pissed plenty of people off tonight,” John tells him truthfully, “but the bottom line is—you’re legal and I’m the worst kind of sod. Who else other
than me can look after your sorry arse?” he asks with a small chuckle.

Sherlock’s smile is so wide that John thinks it has to hurt.

They don’t speak any more as they drive through the night, heading towards London.

They don’t really need to.

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Three days later, John is standing in the middle of the kitchen at 221b Baker Street, contentedly cursing as he tries to rearrange the shopping which he bought the previous day. He knows that Sherlock remembers all of the rules that they went over just a mere two days ago—specifically the rules for the kitchen where they keep their food items—he just chooses not to follow a single thing which John had discussed. John figures that he will end up having to label the cupboards, drawers, and the vegetable crispers in the fridge because he doesn’t want to stumble across any more surprises (though he can’t deny that he was curious about the eyeballs in the jam jars which Sherlock had left on the worktop). He is sure that eventually Sherlock will end up ignoring whatever labels John puts up, going about his business as if John has not gotten on to him at least a dozen times in the past two days for his “experiments” in common living areas of the flat.

As John stares at the mess in the kitchen around him, he wonders briefly if he is prepared for all of this. He wonders if he really has the fortitude to live the rest of his life with a madman. As soon as he thinks that, though, he knows the answer. Of course he is prepared for this. Sherlock is the only person who has ever fit so seamlessly into his life, against his very heart, from the minute that the two met. Sherlock makes him feel so many things—frustration, irritation, anger, joy, love—and John knows that he would never want to be anywhere else but here, in Baker Street, staring at a jar full of eyeballs. He would continue fighting for Sherlock if he needed to. He would do anything for this chance to start his life over, with someone that he loves so desperately. Someone who makes his life worth living.

Just then, Sherlock enters the flat, home from a long early-morning walk around the city. He has taken to spending lots of time wandering about London at all hours of the day, mapping the streets and memorising how things look in different light. John thinks it is wonderful timing for Sherlock to have made his way back home just as he is going over what he would like to say to the teen about his lack of following the rules.

“Sherlock,” he calls from the kitchen, catching the brunet’s attention before Sherlock can wander off to the sitting room to mess about on his laptop or trudge off to their bedroom for a cat nap. “Remember what we discussed the other day? About your things and where they belong?” his tone is patient and kind, and he can’t help the small smile on his lips even though he really is frustrated. “Remember, we talked about how I get half of the shelves in the fridge along with half of the wardrobe and dresser, and you’re not allowed to keep anything dangerous or ‘experiment related’ out in the open where Mrs. Hudson could stumble upon it,” John reminds him. He hasn’t looked into the corners of the bedroom, but John is more than positive that something is lurking there, if the eyeballs are any indication. “You’re also not to keep anything that can rot or mould out on the worktop in the kitchen. Remember, we talked about this?” he presses. Sherlock, on the other hand, seems content to continue to ignore him. “That includes body parts, human or animal,” John clarifies, just in case Sherlock hadn’t understood, though John knows that’s not possible. The fact that he has to state these rules at all is ridiculous enough, he thinks. He can’t believe he has to go over them multiple times. They should really be common knowledge.

Finally Sherlock turns to him from across the kitchen and smiles at him, the gesture full of affection and exasperation, as if John is the one who is being adorably unreasonable. John knows
that Sherlock would probably scoff at all of John’s rules and the fact that he hasn’t yet, or tried to fight them, pulls at John’s heart strings.

While they are arguing amicably about the storage of Sherlock’s more dangerous and caustic chemicals, John’s mobile goes off. A part of him wonders who could possibly be calling him so early in the morning, and his heart sinks when he sees Mary’s name on his ID. He answers it, though, turning away from the kitchen and walking into the sitting room. He had sent over divorce papers the previous day and he worries that there might be a problem with them which she needs to discuss.

When he answers the phone with a curt, “Hello,” though, he can tell by the sound of her voice that she is not calling to complain about a small problem with the papers.

“What is it, Mary?” His voice is clipped and sharp, and his tone and the name that comes out of his mouth brings Sherlock to the room as well.

“John, it’s been three days. Where are you?” Mary asks, her voice filled with worry and something that he suspects are unshed tears.

“I told you where I was going,” he states, tone softening a bit. He knows she must be concerned, and he doesn’t want to be the bad guy anymore. Just because they will soon be divorced doesn’t mean she can’t still be worried for him. “I’m in London now.” He doesn’t say who he is with, but he figures she most likely knows. The more days that have passed, the more he feels safe here with Sherlock. If Mary had called the proper authorities by now, John feels safe in the knowledge that Mycroft has kept true to his word. No one has tried to find them here in London, yet. He dares to feel hopeful.

“When are you going to stop this nonsense and come home?” she asks without preamble. Over the phone, Mary’s words are edged with a grating shrillness, something that John remembers from their arguments and does not miss at all.

He sits down heavily on the sofa and turns to look at Sherlock, standing awkwardly in the doorway between the kitchen and the sitting room, looking like he doesn’t know what to do. “I am home, Mary,” he tells her. He can see Sherlock visibly relax at his words. “Sign the divorce papers and don’t call me again. I’m home now, and this is where I’m going to stay.”

As he rings off, John holds out a hand for Sherlock, asking him silently to join him on the sofa. Sherlock gingerly walks towards him and sits down next to him. John puts his arm around Sherlock and pulls him close, kissing him softly on the lips. The two sit curled up against each other on their sofa, watching as the sun shines through the windows of 221b Baker Street and sets everything in their flat on fire with the warm glow of a new day.