The Temper Between

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](http://archiveofourown.org/works/363459).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Mature</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Archive Warning:</td>
<td>Choose Not To Use Archive Warnings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category:</td>
<td>M/M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fandom:</td>
<td>Sherlock (TV)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship:</td>
<td>Sherlock Holmes/John Watson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Character:</td>
<td>Sherlock Holmes, John Watson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional Tags:</td>
<td>Witty Banter, Sickfic, Intense Conversations, Miscommunication, Hurt/Comfort, First Time, First Kiss, Fever, Sharing a Bed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Series:</td>
<td>Part 2 of <a href="http://archiveofourown.org/works/363459">The First and Last Trilogy</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stats:</td>
<td>Published: 2012-03-16 Completed: 2012-06-28 Chapters: 9/9 Words: 26740</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**The Temper Between**

by [Phyona](http://archiveofourown.org/users/Phyona)

**Summary**

Sherlock and John catch a fever. Sequel to [The Last Drop](http://archiveofourown.org/works/363459).

*(Chinese Translation)*
Chapter 1

Chapter Notes

Welcome to the sequel to 'The Last Drop'! It only took me four excruciating rewrites and a great deal of wine to pop out this bad boy. I hope you like it. Really, I do.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

John had been angry with Sherlock many times before. In fact, it was expected that the consulting detective would say cruel, apathetic things or be reckless with his own well-being to the point of insanity, for which John would respond accordingly. Such responses ranged from belligerent yelling to silent treatments, with all manner of chastising in between. Truth be told, being angry with Sherlock was not only anticipated, but was a fundamental aspect of their friendship. It was familiar and temporary, ending as quickly as it began, with each side conceding to the other in the smallest possible way.

This time was different.

John had never been as furious with another human being as he was standing there, rain soaking though every layer of clothing, eyes locked on his flatmate. He had reached his breaking point. For one long week he’d put up with the worst version of Sherlock Holmes he’d ever had the displeasure of witnessing. At first, he’d chalked it up to another one of his moods, a fleeting fixation brought on by their challenging new case, but when it continued, incessantly, day after day, something inside John began to fester. John had always prided himself as a patient man, but nothing could have prepared him for such a specific brand of torment.

John was being ignored.

And ‘ignored’ was a gentle way of putting it. More accurately, it was as though Sherlock had deleted John’s existence from his mind, particularly when they were out on the case. He’d been left behind, talked-over, kept uninformed, and, worst of all, almost never looked at directly. Even the dim, imperceptive spectators from the Met could tell something was out of sorts, and they weren’t privy to the borderline catatonic state Sherlock exhibited in their flat. He wouldn’t sleep, he wouldn’t eat, he wouldn’t move from the sofa (despite John’s protestations), and he wouldn’t engage John in any significant way. The most John had managed to get out of him since Lestrade called with information about the case (the morning after what John affectionately referred to as ‘Apocalyptic Hangover Day’) were grunts, taciturn refusals to eat or sleep properly, and, if he was lucky, a demand for absolute silence.

John did his best to rationalize that Sherlock’s sudden change towards him had nothing to do with the innocent night of cuddling they’d spent in his bed, but to little avail. He felt embarrassed and regretful, as though something in their partnership was tarnished beyond repair from his pathetic desire to share some body heat. As a result, he’d withheld from mentioning any discontentment with Sherlock’s new attitude towards him (or lack thereof), which only served to inflame his frustration like an infection. The more John turned a blind eye to Sherlock’s disregard, the more his fury festered.

He had been following Sherlock along the bank of the Thames for hours in a torrential downpour
when the last of his reserves dried up. He was freezing, soaking wet, and exhausted, which was only made worse by the reality of how much more detrimental the weather would be on Sherlock’s health. From the sparse glances John had stolen of Sherlock’s face, it was evident that the consulting detective was what could only be described as ‘unhealthy.’ His sharp cheekbones were jutting out more than usual, his eyes sallow and skin almost blue it was so pale. The doctor in John was going crazy.

“Sherlock?” John asked in his last attempt at a level tone. Nothing.

“…Sherlock?” he tried again. When the consulting detective didn’t turn around from the pile of rubbish he was riffling through, John’s careful mask cracked.

“What the hell is the matter with you?” he erupted, heartbeat revving up in his chest.

Sherlock didn’t turn around.

“What?” he replied in a tone so low and flat John could barely make it out over the smattering of rain on river water.

“You heard me,” John said, teeth clenching.

“Busy.”

“I don’t care. We’re soaking wet and it’s been hours, Sherlock. This is beyond acceptable at this point. You’re freezing, you’re exhausted, you’ve barely eaten anything all week…it’s time to go home.” John was surprised by how logical he’d managed to sound. Inside, he was simmering with rage, frenzied and clawing just below the surface.

Sherlock rose to his full height but still didn’t turn to face him.

“Go home, doctor,” he said. The words stung John in both their meaning and in the emotionless tone in which they were delivered. They sounded machine-like against the gentle roar of the rain.

“Fine, but you’re coming with me.”

“No, I’m not.”

John had never despised the back of anyone’s head more. He glared daggers at the sopping wet curls.

It occurred to him that this was the most Sherlock had spoken to him at once since the case work began. He felt fleeting relief, and hated himself for it.

“Sherlock, we aren’t getting any closer to solving this case by scavenging in the rain. I know this one has been...challenging, but you’re not doing any good out here making yourself, and me, sick.” He managed to sound compassionate considering how close he was to throttling the man. Sometimes the composed soldier in him seemed to take over without solicitation.

“It is not challenging,” Sherlock snapped, his head jerking to the side like he meant to look at John, but facing forward again. John’s lip twitched upon hearing the irritation in Sherlock’s voice. Irritation was good. He could deal with that. It was the complete lack of anything that confounded him.

“You’ve certainly been taking longer than usual with it.”
“I’m distracted.”

“By what?”

“Leave, John.” The flat disinterest had returned.

“No!”

“Yes. I don’t need you. Go home.”

“Stop it!” John shouted, stomping his foot on the ground, which sent a spatter of mud up his trouser leg. He squeezed his eyes tight. Heaving breaths wracked his chest against the frantic beat of his heart. When Sherlock didn’t reply for a few moments, John opened his eyes once again, wiped away the rainwater clinging to his lashes, and looked back at his flatmate.

“Sherlock?”

In reply, the dark, drenched figure leaned forward, evidently more interested in the rotting pile of filth than John.

“Sherlock!”

He watched as Sherlock’s used his slender, pale hand, to flick dismissively over his shoulder, as if to say ‘shoo.’

And that was all it took for John to officially snap.

Suddenly consumed with a primal ire, he charged at Sherlock, pouncing onto his back and sending them both crashing into the mud and rubbish. While John was a military man who had picked up a fair share of hand-to-hand combat training, Sherlock was a self-taught master of shifty maneuvers and tactical restraints.

As soon as they hit the ground, Sherlock managed to spin around in John’s arms to face him, though John kept his left arm locked around Sherlock’s neck. He fisted his right hand in tweed lapels, tousling Sherlock. Responding instantly, Sherlock grabbed John’s waist, and kicked off the ground, rolling them over so that he was sprawled on top of him.

John squirmed, trying to kick off the ground as well, but unable to get his footing in the slick mud. Sherlock pinned him with a forearm to his chest.

A frustrated sob escaped John’s throat as he pounded his head back. Tightening his grip on Sherlock’s neck and coat, he attempted to prove that he hadn’t lost just yet, and glared, eyes blazing, at Sherlock’s face. Sherlock turned his head to the side in a blatant attempt to keep from meeting John’s eyes.

In one swift move, John released the coat lapels and gripped to Sherlock’s chin, pulling his face towards his own.

“Look at me!” he commanded, as a captain, resonant and final.

Time grinded to a sudden halt. For the first real time in a week, Sherlock’s eyes locked with John’s.

And John was outright dazzled.

He could make out every fleck of green, blue, and grey in Sherlock’s irises, their faces mere inches
apart, closer than ever before. An instant shock of release jolted through him at finally being the center of Sherlock’s attention again. A part of his mind, which had been wound up and tense, relaxed as if to say ‘yes, precisely this.’ John was always knocked sideways when Sherlock’s eyes pierced through him, and having gone without it for a whole week, the effect was amplified ten-fold.

They were both panting against each other’s mouths, sending a tingling thrill through every one of John’s nerve endings. He could taste Sherlock’s steaming breath on his tongue, in his throat. Sherlock’s gaze flickered to his lips, and when they returned to his eyes, even more penetrating than before, John swallowed hard, his mouth bone dry.

While the ground was freezing, and Sherlock’s body was pushing his cold, wet clothes against every inch of his front, John felt like he was on fire. The tips of a few of Sherlock’s curls were grazing against his forehead, depositing droplets of rainwater that John imagined would sizzle into steam on contact.

Soon, the pace of their breathing slowed to a normal tempo, and John closed his mouth, yet maintained their eye contact. They steadily loosened their grips, tension receding. John was fleetingly aware that they were breathing in unison, chests rising and falling together. At the thought, he began to shiver, and once he started it seemed that he not only couldn’t stop, but instigated the same tremors in Sherlock as well. Or had he just not noticed until then? His mind was too clouded to tell.

Gradually, Sherlock slid away the arm that pinned John’s chest, digging his fist into the mud next to John’s head and pushing himself up. As an unfortunate consequence, it pressed his hips harder against John’s for just a moment. John bit his lip to keep from gasping, letting his fingers fall from Sherlock’s chin and arm slip aside as Sherlock clambered to his feet. He extended the hand that wasn’t muddy to John, leaning over him. John stared at it, temporarily paralyzed, but took it and allowed himself to be pulled up.

For a long moment they just stood there, letting the mud and rubbish slide off their backs and plunk onto the ground. They weren’t looking at each other, which John did not like, but he couldn’t bear to see Sherlock’s expression for fear of what he might find.

The choice was taken from him, however, when Sherlock said in a quiet voice, “I’m dizzy.”

As if on cue, Sherlock swayed on his feet, eyes lolling back. John sprung forward, catching him around the waist and steadying, watching as his grey eyes regained their focus.

“We are going home right now,” he stated with authority. As he pulled his thankfully dry mobile from his inner coat pocket and dialed Lestrade, Sherlock offered no form of protest.

It wasn’t until John hung up on Lestrade and began guiding Sherlock back up to the road, that he realized how violently they were both shivering. Whether from his immense experience as a doctor, or from some deep-seeded human instinct, John could swear he felt himself getting sick. The back of his throat tingled, and his skin felt like a hot casing around a freezing interior.

Sherlock seemed to be a bit steadier on his feet, requiring little more than John’s palm flat on his lower back to ascend to the road. Even through the thick, soiled wool John could feel Sherlock’s tremors against his hand. He bit the side of his mouth, angry with himself for not dragging Sherlock away sooner.

The rain dulled to a light drizzle as they waited for Lestrade’s police car to pull up, but as far as John was concerned the damage was done. There was no chance in hell that they wouldn’t get
sick.

“I wonder how long it will take for Lestrade to notice how much mud we got on his seats,” John mused as he pushed open the door to their flat.

“Almost made riding in his detestable vehicle worth it,” Sherlock returned, pulling his coat from his shoulders and letting it fall to the floor. John sighed and picked it up, unacknowledged, and hung it with his own coat on a hook where it couldn’t soil their less-filthy outerwear. Sherlock kicked off his mud-coated shoes, initiating a grumble from John, who placed them beside the door before removing his own.

Before John could register a protest, Sherlock flopped face-first onto the sofa in his drenched hair and clothes, his shirt being only marginally less sodden than his trousers.

“What…no! You’ll get the whole sofa wet.”

“Don’t care.”

“Well I do. And you’re going to be sick if you don’t change. Though there’s probably little chance of avoiding that now.”

“Don’t care. I have to think.”

“Sherlock…”

“Silence.”

“Take off your clothes!” John shouted, an immediate rush of color flooding his cheeks. Sherlock tilted his head to look at him, cheek pressed into the cushion, smirk evident in the corners of his eyes.

“You’ll have to buy me dinner first.”

For a brief moment John wondered if he liked Sherlock better when he wasn’t speaking to him. He didn’t, but that didn’t make him any less inclined to throttle the shivering detective.

“If you didn’t look so horrible right now I’d--”

“I never look ‘horrible.’”

John rubbed his face in his hands, muffling the groan that escaped his lips.

“I’m going to have a shower,” he managed, arms falling to his sides. “When I get back you’d better be wearing something dry.”

“No.”

“What?”

“The case isn’t solved. The riverside was a dead end, that’s clear now. Inconsequential. I just
need to think. Without distraction.”

The anger, which John thought had been dispelled by Sherlock’s grey gaze on the bank of the Thames, swelled with renewed vigor.

“I don’t care about the stupid case! If you want to pretend I don’t exist, fine, but when you stop taking care of yourself the way you did this week, I swear on my life, Sherlock, I…I’ll…”

“What, John?” Sherlock said, all playfulness gone from his tone to be replaced with a bored, unsettling drawl.

“I don’t know.”

“How threatening…” Sherlock murmured. “I’m not some child for you to mollycoddle, John.”

“No, but I am your doctor. How can you expect to solve a case when you let yourself get to this level? For God’s sake, look at you. You’re shivering.”

“So are you.”

John was a bit tripped up by that, but found the traction of his argument again quickly.

“Because I was trying to help you!”

“I don’t need your help,” Sherlock stated, rolling onto his back and draping his forearm over his eyes. “I need to think.”

John pivoted with a stomp and stormed into the kitchen. He ripped open a cabinet door and took out a mug, pounding it as hard as he could onto the countertop without breaking it. As he rifled around for the kettle and fixings for tea, he made as much sound as possible. He slammed drawers, threw down cutlery, and kicked the refrigerator.

“What are you doing?” Sherlock asked, agitation behind his tone, and John turned to find him standing in the doorway.

“Making tea,” John replied through clenched teeth.

“You’re purposefully making noise to distract me.”

“Why would I do that?” John asked in mock innocence. “I thought I could never be a distraction to you.”

He could feel his anger barreling him towards dangerous ground, out of his control. He knew immediately that Sherlock recognized the word, spat with so much weight, from their pub night together. Sherlock’s eyes narrowed on him.

“On the contrary.”

John blinked at him.

“What does that mean?”

“I thought you were going to take a shower.”

“Don’t deflect.” John managed to sound more commanding than he felt. “Is that why you’ve been ignoring me since we…since you got the case? Because you think I’d distract you?”
“If you won’t be using the shower then I will,” Sherlock sneered, eyes flashing, before striding to his bedroom and slamming the door behind him. John grabbed the closest thing to him, an empty test tube, and threw it as hard as he could across the room.

It shattered against the wall, showering flecks of glass onto the tiles and countertop. He didn’t feel any better.

To his great exasperation, John could barely get the tea brewing with his shaking hands, head swimming with fatigue and dizziness with every movement. Just as he managed to fill his cup, a fit of sneezing wracked his body, sending the cup crashing to the floor in an explosion of ceramic shards and searing liquid.

For a long moment he stared down at the steaming mess at his feet, mind blank, and shivered against the clinging damp of his clothes. He laughed as the memory of how lucky he’d considered himself, just one week before, seeped into his thoughts. It felt so absurd now.

He jumped when his phone beeped from beside the door, still inside his coat pocket. Kicking a piece of mug across the floor, he shuffled to claim it. Flicking it on, he had a message from Lestrade.

_Thames river killer turned himself in. Case solved. Break it to him gently._

Despite himself, John grinned somewhat maniacally as he read over the glowing letters. Perhaps his luck was changing.

Chapter End Notes

Any comments would be dressed up in the crown jewels and popped on a throne. No rush!
While John was perfectly aware that it would be more graceful to ignore Sherlock in retaliation for the detective's abhorrent behavior, his vengeful side got the better of him. Before the frenzy of his temper could subside, he marched straight to Sherlock's bedroom door. There was no doubt that Sherlock would practically short-circuit when he learned that the killer had turned himself in, and John felt he was more than owed the look on his face as retribution. 'Breaking it gently' was not a charity he was currently willing to offer.

"Sherlock!" he called tauntingly, crossing his arms and tapping his foot. He waited for a reply for a long moment before knocking. "I got a text from Lestrade about the case..." He leaned with his shoulder against the door and pressed his ear to the wood.

Silence.

"Sherlock?" He was unable to keep the thread of worry from the word, his senses perking up out of well-refined habit. The vision of Sherlock swaying on his feet on the river bank popped into his head, and he immediately reached for the door handle.

"Are you okay?" he asked while slowly pushing the door open.

His heart jumped to his throat.

"Sherlock!" he yelled, barreling towards the crumpled figure of his flatmate on the floor next to the bed. He knelt beside him, placing his hands on the bare skin of Sherlock's neck and waist. His doctor instincts took over instantly, evaluating and cataloguing as much physical data as he could gather.

Sherlock was shirtless, having been evidently preparing for his shower. The top button of his trousers was undone, yet the zipper was still fastened. He was lying on his side, eyes closed and arms sprawled about him. His face was pale, colorless, save the blue half-moons curved beneath his eyelids. There were no signs of spilled blood, so it had to have been an easy fall. John finally let himself breathe when he felt the steady beat of Sherlock's pulse beneath his fingertips.

John scolded himself. Of course Sherlock had fainted. He was exhausted, starved, and unsteady on his feat. You're an idiot, John, he thought.

He gently turned Sherlock onto his back before cupping his face in his hands.

"Sherlock," he said, shaking the detectives head ever-so-slightly. There was a faint fluttering of
eyelashes in response, but little more. "Sherlock," he tried again.

Sherlock's eyes blinked open, irises reflecting bewilderment and a dozen questions as they found focus. John let out a sigh of relief.

"Wha—," Sherlock's voice cracked, grabbing one of John's forearms. He tried to pull his head up but instantly let it fall back to the floor, eyelids squeezing together.

"Take it easy. You must have fainted," John offered. Sherlock opened his eyes, gaze darting in several different directions before settling on John.

John swallowed, still holding Sherlock's cheeks in his hands. He noted that they were burning with fever.

"Bit not good, Sherlock," he said.

"I do not feel well."

John let a short cackle burst from his throat. His lingering fear rendered the sound rather hysterical.

"I can see that." John slid his hands from Sherlock's face to his shoulders. "Let's get you up. I'd make you go right to bed, but you have to eat something first. And then take a shower because your hair is caked in mud and it's grossing me out."

"Doctor's orders?" he asked, words dripping with sarcasm.

"Yes and this time you're actually going to listen to them."

"Or what?"

"Can you, for once in this friendship, not be a bloody impossible git and just do as I ask?"

The corner of Sherlock's lip quivered in amusement. John cleared his throat.

"Do you think you're alright to stand? As concerned as I am I'm not sure it's a good idea for me to help you bathe…"

"Why not?"

John choked on his own spit and sent himself into a fit of coughing. Sherlock gave him a withering look and pushed himself up onto his elbows. John could tell from his expression that he was fending off a whirl of light-headedness.

"Relax, John, I'm quite capable of washing myself."

"I'm aware of that. I just…don't want you to crack your head on the tub," John sputtered a little too defensively, as he tried not to let the words 'washing myself' wreak too much havoc on his mental stability.

He clutched the back of Sherlock's arms and pulled him to his feet. Sherlock teetered only once, clearly resigned not to faint again, and shrugged away John's grip.

John attempted to look Sherlock over once again in his most professional, doctor-like manner, but found himself unavoidably dazed by the pale marble of Sherlock's chest, with its slight indentations of muscle.
Sherlock cleared his throat, and when John forced his eyes to Sherlock's face, the expression he found there was downright infuriating. Sherlock, for lack of better word, looked cocky. John glowered at him.

"You know, I have every reason to bring you to hospital given your little swoon," he remarked, voice cold and low.

"You wouldn't dare…"

"I will if you don't listen to me."

"Is this how you treat all your patients? With threats of hospitalization?"

"Only the shirtless ones."

"I'm going to have a shower," Sherlock stated, thrusting up his chin in a gesture of pride. It was rendered entirely ineffective when he swayed as soon as he took a step. John's hands latched onto Sherlock's waist, attempting to anchor him. Sherlock scoffed and tried to extricate John's grip but only served to obliterate his already compromised balance.

John caught him as he stumbled, face-first, into his chest. While he was hardly surprised considering the man's very recent history of fainting fits, he was no less rattled by the sudden propinquity.

Sherlock's head, which was resting on the curve between John's neck and shoulder, lilted to the side. His cheek pressed into the damp cabling of John's jumper, hands fisted half-around his waist.

"You're wet," Sherlock stated dazedly, breath hot as it brushed over John's clavicle.

"You're sick," he retorted, hands sliding to Sherlock's elbows to help draw him back to standing. Sherlock's face was alarmingly close to his own, and John noticed the pull of fever in his eyes. They were glossy, soft, and reflected a kind of gentle unpredictability. He swallowed.

"C-can I make you toast?" John asked, sounding far more flustered than he'd intended. Sherlock looked puzzled for a moment, as though trying to work out exactly what strange contraption this 'toast' thing was. Apparently deciding it was agreeable, Sherlock nodded and allowed John to lead him to the living room.

With his palms firmly capping Sherlock's bare shoulders, John pushed him down into his usual chair. Sherlock pulled his legs up and wrapped his arms around them, resting his forehead against his knees. John patted his hair awkwardly before turning towards the kitchen.

Very carefully, John maneuvered his way across the kitchen tiles on tiptoes, eyes peeled for any stray bits of glass. While he knew it would be a good idea to sweep the floor and clean up the pieces of mug and test tube, he didn't have the energy to care. He threw a towel down on the puddle of tea, deciding that would do for the time being.

After slotting two pieces of bread into the toaster he made his way back to the living room.

"Won't be a minute," he said, faltering when he really looked at Sherlock. With his fists clenched around his legs, Sherlock looked as though he was desperately trying to keep himself from shuddering. He wasn't very successful.

John sighed and retrieved a blanket from the back of his own chair. After clearing his throat and drawing a pointed breath, he wrapped it around Sherlock's shoulders. Before he could think better
of it, John rubbed his hands swiftly up and down Sherlock's arms. The shivers vibrating through Sherlock's body eased a fraction.

"John," he murmured into his knees.

Before John could reply he was startled into focus by the spring and pop of the toaster. He hurried to it, shaking his head to dissipate the fog of his thoughts.

"Jam or marmalade?" he called. He was answered with an indecipherable grunt from Sherlock's slumping form. It was a silly question anyways. John only even bought marmalade because Sherlock preferred it. While he hesitated to admit it, John's knowledge of Sherlock's eating habits was about as thorough as Sherlock's regarding tobacco ash, and decidedly more practical.

After coating the toast with a thin smear of the orange spread, John carefully made his way back to Sherlock and held it out to him on a plate.

"Eat," he said with all the assertiveness of a commanding officer. Sherlock, with what appeared to be a tremendous effort, picked his head up, unfurled a fist, and took the plate from John.

John tried not to look too shocked as he watched Sherlock take a bite of the toast without protest, chewing though he kept his eyes closed.

John crossed his arms and looked down at him. As he watched the toast disappear between Sherlock's pouting lips, his thoughts started to cloud over. His eyelids felt heavy, muscles tiring from the effort of shivering against wet clothes. The last of his reserves were quickly depleting. He assured himself that as soon as Sherlock was taken care of John could shower, attempt to make tea again, and get into bed as fast as humanly possible.

"Finished?" he asked as Sherlock swallowed the last piece of toast.

"Obvious," he mumbled back, tone lacking its usual bite.

John took a moment to switch completely back into 'doctor mode', suppressing the complaints of his withering body. He ran his eyes over the frail figure of his flatmate, absorbing the almost translucent skin, the fuzzy and wilted expression. The only evidence that sustenance had any effect on him at all was the small blossom of color appearing across his cheek bones. Regardless, Sherlock still looked more diminished than John had ever seen him.

"I can't believe I'm gonna say this…” he began, idly coiling and uncoiling his left hand at his side. "But I'm going to need to watch you while you shower… . No, not like that you bloody idiot," he added when Sherlock raised an eyebrow and quirked up the corner of his lip.

"I know what you meant. I just like seeing you flustered."

"My flatmate is a sadist," John groaned to himself.

"You should really take off those clothes first," Sherlock remarked in a tone that sounded deceptively like concern. John's eye twitched, but he set his jaw.

"Nope, won't fall for it this time. In your words, 'you'll have to buy me dinner first."

"I mean, you're going to get sick."

"Says the one with the fever…"
"I don't get fevers."

"Well, you wouldn't if you didn't fiddle around in the rain all day."

"I wasn't 'fiddling around,' I was—"

"Yes, yes, being the greatest and most powerful detective in all the land, I know." John pulled the empty plate from Sherlock's grasp and brought it to the kitchen. After placing it in the sink, he found a clean glass and filled it with water, before returning to Sherlock. "Here, drink this and then you can have your shower."

Sherlock glared at the water as though it had personally affronted the House of Holmes, but drank it down in a few hefty gulps nonetheless.

"I still have to finish the case, John," he said quietly after wiping the back of his hand across his lips.

"Well…no, actually, you don't."

Sherlock's eyes shot up to meet John's, a sudden burst of light sparking behind them. John swallowed, utterly unprepared to have Sherlock's analytical eye penetrate him.

"You got a message from Lestrade, didn't you," he stated, no hint of a question in his tone. John didn't feel the satisfaction of revenge that he was hoping for. Rather, a chill swept through him that had nothing to do with his blooming fever.

After a moment, he nodded, knitting his brow.

Sherlock bit down on his lip and began shaking with renewed intensity. John held his gaze, though he could see, and even feel, the anger building behind the grey.

Without warning, Sherlock launched his empty water glass across the room and into the kitchen where it hit the refrigerator and shattered.

"Wh-what the hell did you do that for?" John shouted, eyes wide.

Sherlock raised his eyebrows, the silent jibe of 'you're hardly one to talk' fiercely written on his face.

"Look, Sherlock, I'm sorry about the case but—actually, you know what, I'm not. Delete that. I'm not sorry at all."

Sherlock narrowed his eyes and John straightened up.

"You're going to calm down and get up and take a goddamn shower and then go to bed, and that's the end of it."

"You can't really believe that you—"

"Now, or I'll pick you up and carry you in there myself."

Sherlock eyed him. John could see right through his expression; the way he was recognizing the severity of his tone, but also appraising how far he could push. Ever the disobedient child.

John snatched the opportunity and lunged at Sherlock, who jumped, eyes blowing wide. John pushed one arm under Sherlock's bent knees and the other around his mid-back, clasping, and
pulling him up from the chair. He felt a burst of old pain in his shoulder, but ignored it for the sake of witnessing Sherlock looking positively thunderstruck. Sherlock threw the blanket from his shoulders and his hands flailed, as though he were at a complete loss of where to put them, while John carried him tight against his torso.

"J—John, what on earth are you doing?"

"I warned you," he said in a tight voice, straining from the weight, as he turned and began walking towards the bathroom.

"Put me down this instant! You're hurting your shoulder."

"Promise."

"What?"

"Promise you'll do what I say until you're better."

"Oh for—John stop it!" John took a couple heavy steps. "Alright, alright, fine!"

"Say I promise."

"I promise. Now, put me down."

Gradually, John released Sherlock's knees and guided his feet to the ground. He kept his arm around Sherlock's back to keep him steady.

"Your methods are extremely unorthodox," Sherlock grumbled as he allowed himself to be led to the bathroom.

"Unorthodox works."

Once they stepped onto the tiled floor of the bathroom, John tentatively released him. He walked over to the shower and turned the nozzle, pulling his arm out before the burst of water spurted forth.

"I assure you, I'm quite capable of—"

"I know, I know," John sighed, holding up a placating hand. "I'm going to get your pyjamas for you but leave this door open. If you start to feel at all light-headed, call me. I'm serious, Sherlock. Remember, you promised."

"Under coercion," he argued weakly, all fight gone from his eyes.

"Still counts."

As John turned and left the bathroom, heading for Sherlock's room, he barely heard Sherlock's quiet reply:

"I know."

Chapter End Notes
I hope to update once a week (on Fridays or Saturdays) if all goes according to plan. I usually update my progress on my tumblr if you're ever feeling curious, but mostly I just post slashy pictures of Johnlock or nostalgic nods to Nintendo 64. Like a boss.
Chapter 3

Chapter Notes

I feel like I might contract a cold from writing this damn fanfic. Method writing for the win. I really can’t say it enough how much I look forward to reading your reviews. I refresh my gmail far too much in anticipation of them, if I’m being honest. Thank you so much, my darlings! I treasure you.

An odd sensation of intimacy buzzed in John’s chest as he extracted an old t-shirt, pyjama trousers, and blue silk robe from Sherlock’s dresser. He’d gone through the drawers in a cursory fashion a couple times before in his search for stashes of cocaine or cigarettes, but it never felt like this. He had never been careful not to upset Sherlock’s obnoxiously precise index of clothing, usually riffling with a thread of indignation to his movements. Now, every brush of fabric against his skin felt uniquely personal, as though he was touching a part of Sherlock that was off limits to anyone else.

When he pulled out the pyjama bottoms, subconsciously picking out his favourites (the pinstripe grey pair), he caught sight of the corner of something hidden beneath them. He glanced over his shoulder before picking it up, assuring himself that Sherlock was still in the shower. Sherlock had a knack for sneaking up behind him; the man was like a cat.

Turning back to the drawer, he pushed aside the other sets of pyjamas and plucked out the hidden object.

As soon as he realized what it was his hand flew up to cover his mouth. There, staring up at him, was a photograph of Sherlock as a young child.

And he was dressed as a pirate.

A breathy, short laugh escaped John’s lips, which were spreading into a grin against his palm.

While the boy in the picture was undeniably Sherlock, given the wild crop of dark curly hair and the ever-piercing grey eyes, there was a softness there that was entirely absent from the adult version. His expression was serious, since, of course, young Sherlock would approach being a pirate with grave commitment, but so much of the protective outer shell had yet to harden. Vulnerable, was the best way John could describe it by comparison. His cheeks were a little more filled out, lacking the sharp angles John was so used to, and his plump cupid’s bow was unavoidably cute, puckering out from the way he’d set his jaw.

John rubbed the hand at his mouth over his face, forcing his gaze away from the image. Sherlock would start to suspect something if John didn’t return with the pyjamas soon, not to mention the worry gnawing at the back of his mind that Sherlock might faint in the shower and crack his skull open.

He reached to return the photo to its hiding spot, but couldn’t seem to pry his fingers from it. Nothing John had ever witnessed of his best friend proved him to be so undeniably…human. He wanted to keep it, to hold onto such evidence. He had confirmation there in his hands that Sherlock
wasn’t a freak, or a sociopath, or whatever inadequate term people could come up with to quantify him. He was just a grown up boy who once dreamed of being a pirate.

Before he could think too much on it, John, still holding the picture, strode from Sherlock’s room into the living room. He couldn’t very well hide it in his damp pockets and ruin it, so, grabbing the nearest book he could find, which was his old copy of *Gray’s Anatomy*, he slid the photo between the pages. He placed the book on the table next to his chair, utilizing Sherlock’s advice that the best hiding place was in plain sight, and headed for the bathroom.

Standing outside the half-open bathroom door, John smoothed out the clothing bundled in his arms and cleared his throat.

“Sherlock, you alright?” John was hoping for his tone to not be quite so high-pitched, but he supposed it could have been worse.

“Fine, John,” Sherlock’s voice said in a weak, echoing reply.

“You don’t sound so good. I’m coming in, alright? Just gonna leave your clothes on the toilet for you.”

With tentative steps John crossed into the bathroom, beelining it for the toilet and keeping his head facing ahead of him. A wave of warm steam washed over him, which was welcome given how cold he was. His shivering body seemed to bath in the heat.

He put down the toilet seat and placed Sherlock’s outfit on top of it. As he turned, he accidentally looked into the mirror above the sink, giving himself a perfect view of Sherlock’s very naked showering form.

He immediately halted in his tracks and went rigid, eyes going wide and locking on the sight reflecting back at him. Sherlock was leaning against the glass of the shower door, eyes hidden behind his forearm. It would take little more than a breeze to knock him off his feet, given the way he swayed slowly from side to side.

“Ehem, Sherlock?” John said, his concern proving stronger than his embarrassment. He still refused to let his eyes wander anywhere lower than Sherlock’s chest for the sake of his sanity, though, even if his figure was blurred behind the fogged-up glass.

Sherlock grunted.

“You’re going to faint, aren’t you,” John sighed, resting his hands on his hips.

“Probable.”

John whipped a fresh towel from the rack beside the sink and went to the shower, still keeping his eyes as high as he could. It wasn’t like he hadn’t seen Sherlock naked before. The man wasn’t what anyone could describe as ‘modest’, Buckingham Palace escapade as standing proof.

He held open the towel in both hands and turned his head to the side.

“Come on,” he said.

With heavy limbs Sherlock slid the glass door aside. He stumbled, barely keeping his balance, from the shower and into the towel, which John wrapped around him. Overlapping it tightly on his back, John rubbed his hands up and down, drying and comforting, while Sherlock rested his wet forehead against John’s shoulder.
With careful steps, John coaxed Sherlock towards the toilet seat. He pulled the pile of Sherlock’s
clothes aside before lowering him onto it. Just to be safe, John wrapped another towel around
Sherlock’s back.

“Put your head on your knees if you’re dizzy,” he offered, sounding far more like a doctor than he
felt. In truth, he was having a bit of trouble breathing.

“Here are your pyjamas,” he said, thrusting them into Sherlock’s arms, fighting back the
bewildering instinct to run from the room before he did something stupid. “I’ll be in the hall.
Lemme know when you’re dressed.”

Sherlock nodded, face cast down. John walked out into the hall as fast he could without raising
suspicion. He leaned against the wall next to the doorway and released a long, slow exhale in a
weak attempt to center himself.

He’d just held a very naked, very wet Sherlock with nothing but a towel between them. And
strangely, that wasn’t nearly as unsettling as Sherlock allowing himself to be held like that. John
ran his fingers over the side of his neck, next to the collar of his jumper, and felt the cooling
moisture Sherlock’s hair had left behind. He stared at the droplets on his fingertips, brushing them
away with his thumb.

John thumped his head back against the wall, glaring up at the ceiling. He wondered if being
furious with Sherlock, as he had been just minutes before, was a preferable alternative to the way
he felt now: like his heart was fluttering so wildly in his chest that it might fly out of his mouth at
any moment and fall to the floor. He pressed the back of his hand against his forehead, jarred
slightly by the heat of his own skin. Good. At least he could blame his ridiculous butterflies on a
raging fever.

He jumped when the bathroom door slammed against the wall, a frazzled-looking and fully clothed
Sherlock the culprit. His dark curls, evidently towel-dried, were sticking out in every direction, his
face flushed from fever and steam.

“Alright?” John said, getting a firm grip of his elbow. The clothes John had brought him hung
unevenly on his figure in a way John had only witnessed when Sherlock was in his worst throes of
boredom. Usually he appeared as though every article of his ensemble was tailored by magic.

“Lovely,” Sherlock said, making no attempt to free John’s grip.

Sherlock shuffled his way to his room, requiring John’s sturdy touch on a number of intervals,
before collapsing in a heap onto his bed. John almost laughed as he watched Sherlock flop around
heavily, attempting to insert himself beneath the covers. Struck by his own charity, for any other
flatmate would have had a good chuckle and left him to his bedding battle, John took hold of the
sheets and duvet, lifting, so Sherlock could settle in.

Sherlock buried his face in the pillows, curling in on himself and shivering. John felt a pang of
pity at the sight of him. He retrieved the extra blanket from the floor of the living room and spread
it out over Sherlock’s duvet.

“You need a fever reducer,” John said, picking up the bottle of paracetamol from the bedside table,
just where he’d left it on the morning of his apocalyptic hangover. He opened it and threw two
pills onto the duvet near Sherlock’s hand. “Hang on.” He took Sherlock’s empty water cup from
the table as well, filling it to the brim in the bathroom, and returning.

Sherlock hadn’t moved, but his eyes weren’t closed either.
“You look really out of it. Here, take the pills.”

Sherlock pushed up onto his elbow, snatching the pills from the duvet and swallowing them down with the water John offered.

“You should take them too,” Sherlock said, looking up at him.

“Hm?” John hummed, momentarily confused.

“You have a fever.”

“Oh, right. Yeah.” John opted to just take the bloody pills instead of reminding Sherlock for the umpteenth time that he was, indeed, a doctor and could take care of himself.

“Oh, and I found your mobile in the bathroom” he said as he placed the cup and phone on the table next to the pain killers. “Well, I’m gonna’ shower and go to bed. Text me if you need me.”

“Why would I need you?”

John paused in the doorway, biting his lip at the familiar repeat. When he turned back, he found Sherlock smirking at him.

“No reason at all,” John replied through a sigh.

“I can think of a few, doctor.”

A swell of heat spread across John’s cheeks. Sherlock was never one for innuendo, sexual or otherwise, so it must have been accidental. Unfortunately, his stupid capillaries couldn’t seem to tell the difference. Sherlock just kept smirking, tired eyes glued to him.

“Right.” John’s voice cracked on the word. “Um…goodnight, then.”

Showering, which he so desperately needed, offered a welcome respite from both the trials of the day and the aching shivers. Simply peeling off his damp clothes had been absurdly gratifying.

On the down side, without the diminished health of his flatmate to distract him, John began to feel the symptoms of illness. He was lightheaded, throat sore and forehead throbbing. More than anything, he was exhausted, and not just from following Sherlock around in the rain for hours on end. Ever since Sherlock had taken the case and consequently started to ignore him, John had barely slept. Even when he did sleep his dreams sought to torment him with playbacks of the night spent being spooned by his flatmate. John had unconsciously reached for him in the night more times than he dared calculate.

After finishing his shower, changing into his warmest pyjamas, and tackling the harrowing task of acquiring tea in a kitchen full of shattered glass, John finally got into bed.

He let out a great, loud sigh as he slid between the sheets and took long sips of his tea, savoring the heat it generated in his belly. Once finished, he found himself instinctively curling into the same exact position Sherlock had been in, shivering included, with the duvet pulled up to his ear.

John hadn’t gotten a fever so severe since he’d been shot, a fact he wasn’t pleased to be reminded of. As he lay there, wishing more than ever that he had a certain lanky, warm body to wrap himself around, it seemed that sleep refused to take him. Every time he felt himself drifting into black, a twitching fit of shivers would wrack his body, snapping him awake. By the sixth time, John started to get aggravated.
Worse, the strange half-sleep limbo he found himself trudging through was inflicting him with some rather vivid fever dreams. Over the span of what couldn’t have been more than an hour, John’s thoughts had oscillated between aliens, cows, Sherlock, candy floss, Top Gear, Father Christmas, and Sherlock again. He giggled quietly at the absurdity of it all.

Just as he was beginning to contemplate the cosmic nature of black holes, he was jaunted into waking, not by a tremor, but by a text alert. He scrambled to grab the mobile from his night stand, attempting to keep as much of himself beneath the covers as possible. After a few moments of adjusting his eyes to the light of the screen, he was able to make out the message.

*Fevers are strange. SH*

John’s lips spread into a goofy smile.

*You too?*

*Can’t stop shaking. SH*

*Yeah, me either. I’m freezing.*

*Likewise. SH*

John stared at the message for a moment, unable to come up with a reply. Perhaps that was the end of the conversation. He never could tell with texts.

*Bored. SH*

John huffed out a short laugh. For a walking enigma Sherlock had a way of being extremely predictable at times.

*What do you want me to do about it?*

*Entertain me. SH*

*That didn’t go so well last time.*

*What do you mean? SH*

*The drinking game thing.*

*Why don’t you think that went well? SH*

*You’re joking, right?*

*No. SH*

*You know why.*

All hints of a smile had drained from John’s face. This was not the conversation he was meant to be having with a fever muddling his thoughts.

*I thought it was an extremely effective method for fending off boredom. SH*

*Not worth the consequences.*

*You mean the hangover? SH*
No.

You’re being perplexing. SH

I’m told I have that effect.

For a few long moments there was no reply. John blinked at the mobile, watching it shake back and forth with his shivers.

Minutes stretched into a half hour, and before he knew it John was sinking back into his fever dreams. Still, full sleep eluded him, and he felt colder than ever.

It wasn’t until a full hour had passed that John received another text from Sherlock.

We should share body heat. SH

John’s eyes nearly bulged out of their sockets. There was no way Sherlock had any idea what a text like that implied. He couldn’t. They were cold, they had fevers. Even John had thought about the advantages of having another person’s warmth. Sherlock was just solving a problem. Obviously.

Unfortunately, the rationale of it did nothing to quell the unfurling tingle of nerves working its way down his chest.

I’m not sure that’s a good idea.

It’s logical. SH

Again, didn’t go so well the last time.

I’m coming up. SH

John shot up into a sitting position, falling back down when he was struck with a rush of dizziness. Typing as fast as he could, while trying to refocus his vision, he frantically tried to stop Sherlock.

Don’t! What if you faint?

I won’t. SH

How can you possibly know that?

Circumstantial evidence. SH

What?

I’m already outside your door. SH

John’s eyes, wide with panic, darted to the door. He could indeed make out the shadow of Sherlock’s feet in the bar of light peaking from beneath it.

He jumped when he heard a short knock.

“C-come in then,” he said, teeth chattering.

He swallowed hard on his aching throat as the door was pushed open.
Chapter End Notes

Pirate!Sherlock has some real fine booty if you know what I mean...
Chapter Notes

I must offer my sincerest of apologies for getting this chapter to you a few days later than planned. I assure you it was not for lack of effort but rather lack of satisfaction. I wanted to be very careful with my choices in this bit, as you will hopefully soon understand. On a different note, I'd like to extend a huge sloppy whopping 'thank you' to those of you who review. You are magical.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

John wasn't sure what he expected to see when the door hit the wall, revealing a looming figure in its frame, backlit by the hall lamp. Regardless, whatever he might have predicted would have been grossly insufficient.

Sherlock had bundled himself from head to knee in his absurdly billowy white down duvet. John could just barely make out the glistening refraction of two eyes peeking out from between the folds. The sheer ridiculousness of the image was enough to shock John out of an appropriate reaction.

"You look like a pastry," he observed dreamily, sending himself into a fit of giggles.

Even without being able to distinguish Sherlock's features in the dim light, John knew he was being glared at.

"You look like a bad friend," Sherlock quipped, voice even raspier than usual.

"Harsh. And here I thought I was complimenting you."

"You were laughing at me."

"It was a complimentary laugh."

"You compared me to a pastry."

"I like pastries."

"May I come in now or shall I just stand here while you amuse yourself over baked goods at my expense?"

"I still don't think this is a good idea, Sherlock."

"I only ever have good ideas."

"You're barmy if you think—"

"I'm cold, John."

John released a loud groan, pausing to fix Sherlock with his most intimidating glare, and flipped back the covers.
"You'll have to crawl over me if you want to get in. I'm not taking the wall side," John said, hoping blatant indignation might preserve some of his pride.

Barely had the words left his mouth before Sherlock leapt forward onto the bed, jostling John against the mattress and scurrying over his legs. He divested himself of his pastry-like armor, burrowing between the sheets in one swift movement. As he set about meticulously adjusting his (John's) pillows, John grasped his abandoned duvet and spread it out over his own. At least the extra cover was a welcome addition to his bed, even if he hadn't decided whether or not his flatmate was.

John propped himself up on his right elbow, facing Sherlock. While the light was faint, John could make out most of Sherlock's face and mop of hair in such close proximity, the rest of him hidden beneath the bedding. Glassy grey eyes were watching him intently.

"Alright, Sherlock. Let me make it clear that I'm only letting you sleep in here because you're sick and I'm sick and I'm freezing my arse off. The moment you start…start being…"

"What, John?"

"You, you're outta here."

"Who do you want me to be, then?"

John pondered this for a moment. He hadn't considered that Sherlock could alter his personality at the drop of a deerstalker whenever it suited his needs. Of course, John could always tell when he was pretending. He recognized the real Sherlock, in all his agitation, detachment, peevishness, and radiating brilliance, far too well to be fooled. Besides, the unvarnished version of his flatmate was his favorite of all the iterations he'd witnessed, even if it wasn't the easiest to manage (to say the very least).

"I don't know. Just…be the good version of you."

"I'm sure I have no idea what you're talking about."

John raked his fingers through his hair, noting that it was sticking out, but making no effort to tidy it.

"No, I don't suppose you would."

Sherlock's eyes narrowed on him as if to say 'you're being difficult just to irritate me.' John knew the look well.

"Oh, and also try not to wake up tomorrow morning and decide I don't exist anymore. I don't really feel like weathering that one again." John felt a twinge in his chest once the words left his mouth. He hadn't planned on bringing up the week of torment he'd endured at Sherlock's hand, and his own voice sounded pathetically bitter to his own ears.

Sherlock shifted onto his side, propping himself up on his elbow in manner that mirrored John's position.

"That is not what happened," he said, voice deeper than usual. In John's doctor psyche he vaguely noted that Sherlock's throat was probably even more sore than his own.

All hopes of coherency were snuffed out when John noticed the sheer heat emanating from Sherlock's body. Suddenly, every inch of John's skin itched with the need to gravitate towards it, to
quell the shivers and relieve the aching cold, as a tree curling towards the sun. He was intoxicated with it.

"What happened then?" John asked quietly, shifting closer to Sherlock. And then he added, barely above a whisper, "You just left."

Sherlock's brow pulled down, narrowing his gaze on John. There was a simmering woven into the silver focus of his irises, perhaps from the fever or something else entirely. John did not have the cognition to tell.

"I was still here," Sherlock said. John swallowed hard on his inflamed throat, using the pain to center himself.

"No, you weren't. Not for me."

Sherlock tilted his head back marginally against the crook of his palm, staring down at John over his cheek bones.

"I…" Sherlock began, closing his mouth when it seemed his thoughts were not as collected as desired. He cleared his throat, wincing when it rebelled. "I feared you would distract me…from the case."

"Have I ever distracted you before?" John asked, a challenge evident in his tone.

"No."

"So, what gave you the brilliant idea that I would suddenly start?"

Sherlock pulled his elbow out from under himself, head flopping onto his pillow harder than necessary.

"I made an educated guess," he said, wiping his palm across his face and through the crop of black curls.

"An educated guess," John echoed, thoughts clouding over as the fever swarmed behind his eyes. He blinked a few times to suppress it. "How did that work out for you?"

"I inadvertently, and somewhat ironically, manifested the feared result through my tactical labors to circumvent said result."

"In English, please?"

"Don't make me repeat myself. This is tedious enough as it is."

"I'm not asking you to repeat, I'm asking you to simplify."

"It's not my responsibility to water myself down to cater to your substandard level of—"

"Sherlock," John growled.

"Fine! I made a…miscalculation. Ignoring you proved to be a far worse distraction than…I…I…"

"Yes?"

"I couldn't bloody focus without you, alright? There. Are you quite satisfied?" he spat, turning his head away from John on the pillow.
John blinked, waiting for his fever-addled mind to translate Sherlock's words. Before John could catch up, however, Sherlock barreled on.

"Which is absurd and extremely disconcerting since I assure you, I managed quite exceptionally before you came along. It was simply that the effort of drawing my focus from you and onto the case was taxing enough to render me incapable of accommodating either and I—"

John cut him off by clamping his hand over the curve of Sherlock's lips.

"Easy. You're fine. I forgive you."

Sherlock parted his lips to speak, but John adjusted so that his palm was sealed over them. He waited until Sherlock exhaled through his nose, tension draining from his body and face, to release his grip. Yet, instead of pulling away completely, he smoothed the back of his first knuckles against the soft arc of Sherlock's cheek. Sherlock's eyes flickered down to the touch, but quickly darted back to John's.

"You have quite the fever there, Sherlock."

In response, Sherlock snaked his hand out from beneath the covers and pressed the back of his own fingers against John's cheek.

"It's mutual."

When it dawned on John just how intimate the position they'd gotten themselves in was, his brain flashed the word 'ABORT!' repeatedly in red neon letters. Unfortunately, his body decided it was a great time to go rogue, and before he knew what he was doing, he slid the calloused tip of his thumb across Sherlock's bottom lip and back. John watched with great satisfaction as Sherlock's pupils dilated and his Adam's apple bobbed, breath hitching in his throat.

"I'm not the only one who gets flustered," John muttered, quirking an eyebrow and feeling thoroughly pleased with himself.

The change in Sherlock's expression was instant, his facial muscles tightening into a cartoonish frown.

"What makes you think I'm flustered?"


"Don't insult the practice. You couldn't be more wrong if you were Anderson. I've never been flustered in my life."

John pulled his hand away from Sherlock's face and rolled his eyes. He clenched his teeth when Sherlock gripped his jaw, perhaps subconsciously, as though forcing John to keep looking at him would drive his argument home.

"Fine," John said, monotone. Sherlock let his hand fall from his face to the mattress between them.

In a demonstration of his exasperation, John turned over and punched his pillow a little more violently than necessary, until it softened. He pulled the duvet up to his ear and nestled into it.

Sherlock remained stationary behind him. John could sense the heat from both his body and the inevitable glare boring into his back. He forced his breathing to a slow rhythm, trying to appear unaffected just to spite him.
After a long drag of rigid silence, John felt Sherlock turn away from him as well, flopping onto his right side and seeming to put as much distance between them as possible on the double bed. John clenched his fists, recognizing that he should probably kick Sherlock out of his room as promised for being so…Sherlock-y, but being unwilling to forfeit the body heat. Yes, just the body heat.

It wasn’t long before John’s eyes grew heavy with fatigue, despite the frantic humming of his thoughts. The lull of Sherlock’s deep, clement breathing behind him provided a soothing tempo. A wave of thick exhaustion surged with every beat of inhale to exhale.

When the fever dreams crept back in, they were wrought with images of the man sharing his bed. At first, Sherlock appeared to him in his normal form; long coat draped about him, staring at John as though waiting for him to comprehend something obvious. John despised the familiar look. Little made him feel more inadequate.

John opened his mouth to speak, but it was as though his sore throat had leech the words from him. He began to grow distressed, impotent with the inability to vocalise, to ask what it was he was meant to know.

He felt rather than saw that something was wrong. Something important and Sherlock needed John to deduce what it was. He reached out to touch him, to clasp the familiar wool lapels and pull, but Sherlock remained just out of his grasp, as though they were two repelling magnets. John’s breathing quickened, his heart rate increased

And then the dream shifted. Suddenly, a blossom of flame erupted from Sherlock’s chest as the rest of him froze, creaking, in a shell of ice. John lunged forward, fear clenching in his stomach, and clawed at the sheets of Sherlock’s frozen, burning cage. Every time his fingers met with Sherlock’s form, his body jolted with a shock of tremors. He thrashed, throat aching with a moan that would not come.

And then he was terrified.

A burst of flames began leaking from the whites of Sherlock’s eyes, orange and red engulfing silver and blue. Something about the image cut through John, unleashing a violent new wave of panic. He felt like he’d been dipped in hot tar. Like Sherlock was shattering before him.

And then, in a flash of color, the ice abruptly melted away, dousing out the flames in a singular motion.

John gasped a full, cool breath. Sherlock’s arm was around him, hand splayed out on the star-shaped bullet scar of his shoulder, tethering him in warmth and peace. The shivers were drained from him, the panic, undone.

When something soft and fleeting pressed into the nape of John’s neck just below his hair line, he exhaled, letting go of the last of his tension, and plunged into a deep, dreamless sleep.

~*~

When John crawled back into waking he understood very quickly that something was different. As his tired mind scrambled to focus and register his surroundings, John was only able to clarify one thing at a time.
The first was that the coy tickling of breath was ghosting across his lips and into his mouth. The next was that he was that he was warm, very warm, particularly his front. And then, when he realised the location of his left hand, his swollen eyes went wide, the grogginess of lingering sleep falling away like a curtain. His hand twitched and froze where it was curved on the dip of Sherlock's waist.

John swallowed, nearly choking when his saliva, tasting of Sherlock, burned his swollen throat. A rush of clarity for the position of each of his extremities shocked through him. His left knee was sandwiched between Sherlock's lower thighs. His right arm was buried under Sherlock's pillow. His hips were lightly pressed into the fabric of Sherlock's pyjama trousers. And, most overwhelming of all, his eyes, nose, and mouth were just centimeters from Sherlock's.

John dared to focus his gaze on Sherlock's eyes, praying on his life that Sherlock was sound asleep. He unclenched his jaw when he found them closed, darting back and forth behind their lids, indicating a REM cycle. It was never usually an easy feat to rouse Sherlock from a deep sleep on the rare occasions that he achieved one. John hoped this time wouldn't be the exception.

His eyes traced down Sherlock's slumbering form, from the pout of his parted lips to the rise and fall of the skin between his clavicles. When he looked at the space between them, just above where the duvet covered, an unexpected tingle of fondness buzzed in his chest. Sherlock's hands were balled into delicate fists with bits of John's t-shirt pinched between a few knuckles.

Oh, Jesus, he thought, shutting his eyes and sighing.

His eyes shot back open when he realised what he'd done, panic that his involuntary exhalation of breath, which had blown right into Sherlock's mouth, had been enough to wake his flatmate.

The bottom dropped out of his chest when Sherlock spoke.

"Jean, où est mon fromage ? Ich benötige ihn für meine Gartenparty ."

Of all the bizare things to come out of Sherlock's mouth, John was fairly certain that was the winner.

"W-what?"

"I capelli di Donovan non sono invitati . Rutherfordium, Thorium, Selenium, Zinc."

"Sherlock?" John slid his hand from Sherlock's waist up to his cheek, which seared with fever under his palm. Sherlock's eyes were still shut, but frenzied behind the lids. "Are you okay—"

"Mycroft se comió todo el pastel ."

"Wh—"

"John on suosikkihenkilön . J'aime son thé ."

John stared down at Sherlock, eyes comically wide, mouth gaping open.

"Oh God," he said to himself. "I think he's broken..."

John pulled his arm out from beneath Sherlock's pillow and pushed himself up into a sitting position, extracting his t-shirt from Sherlock's weak grasp and angling towards him. Gradually, he eased his leg out from between Sherlock's, earning himself a low, displeased grunt.
Before he rose, John ran his fingers across Sherlock's forehead, pushing aside a few tendrils of soft curls. While he knew in the back of his mind that the utterly demented rantings he'd just witnessed would be hilarious to look back on in the future, he couldn't help but worry.

As soon as his weight shifted off the bed Sherlock reached out for him, eyes still closed in sleep.

"John," he whispered, barely audible.

"It's fine, Sherlock. I'll be right back." John pivoted, wrapping his arms around himself as he made his way across the room.

"J'ai besoin de toi ."

John paused in the doorway, an unexpected flash on two years of elementary French, long since forgotten, striking him.

"Yeah," he murmured without turning around. "I know."

Chapter End Notes

As you're now well aware, I had waaaaaaaaaaay too much fun with Google Translate during this writing process, lemme tell you what. I just added the lil pop-up translation via the assistance of you lovely readers, though. Man, I love that trick. You may notice that some are slightly different than what Google provides, and for that I have to thank the native speakers who helped me work out the kinks.

Oh, and as a funny story, this kind of thing actually happened to me when my boyfriend (now of almost five years) got tremendously sick during our first few weeks of dating. I went into his room to check on him in the middle of the night, knowing that he was sporting a raging fever, and was confronted with some pretty bizarre statements. My favorite part was when he repeated 'fromage' over and over again. I, like John, thought he was broken. Ooohhh true love. It's a cheesy thing ;)


Chapter 5

Chapter Notes

I love you readers/reviewers so much I'd spike your tea with hallucinogenic sugar (just to show how much I care).

See the end of the chapter for more notes

When John returned to his room, a flannel, bowl of water, and bottle of ibuprofen in hand, he found Sherlock staring at him quizzically. He froze in the doorway at the sight of pale eyes in the very early morning light, nearly splashing the cool water on himself.

"Oh!" John's haggard throat cracked. "You're awake."

"Where were you?" Sherlock asked with the slightest hint of accusation. His voice was rendered obscenely deep by his sore throat. John could swear he felt it reverberate in his chest.

"Ah, so you're speaking English again," John remarked, crossing the room and depositing the objects on his bedside table.

"What are you talking about?"

John sat on the edge of the bed, angled towards Sherlock with his leg pulled up and folded beneath him.

"You were having some pretty crazy fever dreams." He took the flannel and dipped it into the bowl before wringing away the excess water until it was appropriately moist.

Sherlock, still lying on his side, shifted closer to John, his leg pressing up against him from beneath the covers. Reaching down, John rested the damp compress against his forehead. Sherlock blinked, eyes foggy with fever, seeming mildly surprised by John's movements.

"So tell me," John continued, his own voice gravelly, "exactly how many languages do you speak?"

"Hm? Oh." Sherlock, temporarily entranced by the cool cloth on his forehead, came a little back to himself. "I was talking in my sleep, then." He quirked an eyebrow at John.

"Oh yes...in at least five different languages." John turned the flannel over and pressed it back down, dabbing a bit around Sherlock's hairline. Sherlock shut his eyes briefly at the contact.

"Only five? How unimpressive."

"'Only'?"

"Do you recall anything I said? Perhaps I can translate for you."

John's ears went pink. The only thing he remembered didn't need to be translated.

"No. But really, Sherlock, how many?"
"Twelve fluently but I can get by in about eight more, depending."

John's eyes blew wide.

"De-depending on what?"

Sherlock flicked his wrist dismissively. "How the mood strikes me."

John's mouth fell open.

"On occasion it's extremely relevant to casework to be multilingual," Sherlock added, smirking at John's reaction.

"You're incredible, do you know that?"

"So you tell me."

"Yes, I do tell you and I will continue to do so because you bloody are. You absolutely, completely, obnoxiously are, you raging idiot."

"You have an odd way of complimenting me…"

"You have an odd way of deserving it."

The corner of Sherlock's mouth twitched, but if his expression could have been construed as 'fond,' it morphed so quickly into 'analytical' that John wondered if he'd imagined it. He shook his head and dipped the flannel back into the bowl, repeating the process of squeezing out extraneous water.

When he turned back to reapply it to Sherlock's face, he froze, Sherlock's stare halting him.

"What? What is it?" John asked, hand suspending above Sherlock's head.

"What are we doing, John?"

Sherlock gazed at him expectantly, giving John that all-too-familiar look of 'we both know what's really going here.' John, per usual, had no clue.

"I…I'm trying to bring your fever down," he stammered, reapplying the cloth in demonstration.

Sherlock's eyes narrowed into a glare.

"I can see that."

"Then why…" John began, but shut his mouth when the words utterly failed him. His thoughts oscillated between a multitude of interpretations of what Sherlock could have meant, each seeming as unlikely as the next.

"I think you're a bit…delirious, Sherlock."

The consulting detective sighed deeply, his eyes closing for a moment.

"Perhaps."

"Here, take some ibuprofen." He picked up the bottle and his own glass of water, waiting as Sherlock pushed himself up on his elbows. When Sherlock took the glass from him, John removed two pills and popped them, a little firmer than necessary, right into Sherlock's mouth. Sherlock
blinked, taken aback, but washed them down regardless.

"I couldn't find the thermometer. Any idea why that is?" John questioned, pursing his lips together and furrowing his brow, eager for the subject change. Sherlock had the gall to shrug, not even making a decent effort at evasion. "You used it for an experiment, didn't you."

"A strong possibility."

"I thought I told you to leave my kit alone. How am I supposed to tell if you should go to hospital or not?"

"Easily. Assume I never have to go to hospital."

Sherlock moved to give him back the glass but John, curling two fingers under the base of it, tilted the rim back towards Sherlock's lips. Without hesitation Sherlock began drinking again in long, smooth gulps with John guiding the cup higher and higher until he was satisfied.

"You're dehydrated," he explained, taking the glass and putting it back on his bedside table. Sherlock swallowed loudly, cringing.

"You act as though I'm the only one with the virus. You were having some rather 'crazy' fever dreams as well. Perhaps I should take you to hospital."

"Oh…you, uh, saw that, huh?" John asked, raking his fingers through his hair as a few choice images of fire and ice invaded his thoughts.

"Your writhing about was most distracting."

"At least I wasn't speaking in tongues," John countered defensively, dizzy as his pulse sped up. He grabbed the bottle of ibuprofen, ripping off the cap and shaking two pills into his mouth. He swallowed them without water, instantly regretting it when the dry capsules scraped down his throat, and dropped the bottle back on his table.

"No, you were just moaning my name with unbridled conviction," Sherlock retorted, tone impossibly flat.

John felt the colour drain from his face. He attempted speech but couldn't manage more than a few incoherent chirps.

"Oh, don't be like that. It's not as though I've never seen you in the throes of a nightmare before. You are rather prone to them," Sherlock said, clearly imagining himself to be comforting, before sliding back to his side of the bed. He flipped over the covers and nodded to the space he'd just vacated. John crossed his arms indignantly.

"Don't be an idiot, John. I assure you my fever is quite under control due to your…efforts. It is in your best interests to sleep."

John scowled at him.

"Come to bed, now, or…"

"Or what?"

"Or I'll kick you in the face."

John blinked a few times as Sherlock offered him an awkward half-smile.
"That's my line."

"Well remembered. Now—" he punctuated by patting the mattress.

John managed to keep his gaze severe for a few more moments until his depleted body forfeited completely.

With an exaggerated sigh, he keeled over onto the bed, flopping against his pillow with a whoosh of air. Exhaustion pooled in his head, his eyelids heavy. He maneuvered his heavy legs between the sheets, Sherlock pulling the duvet up to his shoulders for him once he was settled. John probably would have been surprised by such a gesture coming from Sherlock, but warmth and comfort drew all his focus.

Unfortunately, the incessant shivers once again sought to thwart his contentment, resurging with a vengeance. John tried focusing all his will power on ignoring the tremors, but only served to aggravate them further. It was infuriating.

"John?" Sherlock's voice cracked from behind him.

"Mm?"

"If you recall, the purpose of me coming here was to share body heat."

John released a slow exhale of breath, defeated.

"Get on with it, then."

Without hesitation, Sherlock clutched John's hip bone and tugged him backwards into his chest. John promptly abandoned any nagging thoughts of 'flatmates don't spoon!' or 'you'll regret the hell out of this in the morning!' and nestled into the firm heat of another body behind him. Sherlock's palm slid up his torso, settling against his solar plexus. His other arm wedged beneath John's pillow; his ankle, between John's calves.

The hot breath caressing the nape of John's neck was unexpectedly soothing, acting as the perfect pressure point to quell his shudders. He could feel the slightest touch of Sherlock's nose against his hairline, the idea of it sending a tingle of nerves through his chest.

Slowly, he felt each one of his muscles relaxing as they were enveloped in warmth, the hand on his chest both centering and protective.

"You said you needed me," John mumbled, his brain already straddling the line between sleep and waking. He heard the words as though someone else had said them. "In French."

"J'ai besoin de toi? I wasn't aware you spoke French."

"Only a little." John's lips were heavy around the words.

"I was asleep, John."

"Right. So you don't then? Need me?"

There was a pause, and John's thoughts muddled through it with creeping dreams and confusion.

"I believe I told you before: I'd be lost without my blogger."

Even in his borderline unconscious state a smile teased its way across John's lips.
"You need me, too," Sherlock added, quiet and flat, but John didn't fail to detect the hint of vulnerability. It was more obvious to him without the inhibition of full cognition.

"Do I?"

"Oh, oui. Plus que tout."

"Good to know." John muttered, falling fully asleep before he could bother translating Sherlock's words. He got the gist of it anyways.

~*~

John awoke with an agonizing moan, his hand flying to his neck before he opened his eyes. His whole throat ached with a thick, dry pain. He tried to swallow, the few hot drops of spit he could conjure singeing rather than soothing.

"Ow," he choked out, eyes blinking open. He propped himself up on his elbow, ignoring Sherlock's arm when it tightened around him at the movement, and scrambled for the water cup on his night stand. There were only a couple mouthfuls left in it, but John took a long drag.

He was interrupted by the familiar digits of a slender hand, clutching the cup and unapologetically extracting it from his grasp. John fell back onto his pillow, turning a fraction to watch a wild-haired Sherlock wince through gulps of water.

When the glass was empty, Sherlock, rather than placing it back on the table like a normal human being, dropped it over the side of the bed. It hit the floor with a weak thud.

John groaned, rolled onto his back, and began fingering the swollen glands of his throat. They were inflamed, as predicted, but not enough to cause alarm.

"Come here," John croaked, turning towards Sherlock, who was braced up on his forearm, and taking each side of his neck in his hands. He pressed his fingertips against Sherlock's glands, inducing an almost imperceptible flinch from his flatmate.

In the back of his mind, John felt a slight, unclenching relief at physically confirming Sherlock's presence beside him. It was an infinitely better experience than the last time they'd shared a bed, considering Sherlock had been absent upon waking, having left for their new case without him.

With barely concealed humiliation, John had needed to call Lestrade to find out where they were when Sherlock neglected to answer his phone.

"Well, your glands are definitely swollen," John said, removing his hands from Sherlock's warm neck. He was momentarily startled by how deep his voice came out before remembering he was sick.

Sherlock opened his mouth to reply, but instead of his usual string of sarcasm, there emerged nothing but a short, cracked squeak and a wisp of air.

Sherlock's eyes went wide and John couldn't help but leer at him. Sherlock's second attempt at speech was even less fruitful, consisting of little more than a well formed exhale.

"Sherlock Holmes, I do believe you've lost your voice," John mused, not bothering to conceal his
amusement.

"No," Sherlock mouthed soundlessly, now glowering at John as though he were the culprit responsible.

"What's the atomic number of Magnesium?"

Sherlock replied with the most pathetic peep of sound John had ever heard come out of his mouth. Sherlock flushed crimson and John broke into a fit of laughter, which didn't last nearly as long as he would have liked since pain forced him to cease.

"I'm sorry," he said grittily after a moment, yet still smiling. "Couldn't resist. Now, come here; lemme check your fever."

Sherlock, eyes shooting daggers at him, shook his head.

John rolled his eyes, but when he reached up to flatten his palm across Sherlock's forehead, the man jerked out of his reach. John bit his lip and tried again, but Sherlock pushed away from him, pressing himself against the wall and taking his warmth with him.

"Stop that," John ordered, sounding far more harsh than necessary in his raspy burr.

In one swift motion John lunged across the bed, pinning Sherlock in the crook between mattress and wall. Sherlock flailed, but his limbs were bogged down with fatigue and the aches of his illness. His glare was still as potent as ever, though, especially from being so close up.

John stilled but kept his grip firm, waiting for Sherlock to quit struggling. He was mouthing silent words, though John could probably guess their meaning without bothering to read lips.

When Sherlock officially tuckered himself out he shifted into a cold, static indignation. John ignored him for the sake of his original goal, plastering his palm over Sherlock's forehead.

"Your fever hasn't broken," he murmured after a moment, earning himself a fierce eye roll that clearly drawled 'obviously' without needing words.

Once his objective was achieved, John's marvelously inconvenient brain saw fit to remind that not only did he have Sherlock pinned to the wall and his bed, but that they were touching from chest to (John's) toe, and that it was, in fact, morning. John might not have been as spry as once was, but even if he hadn't spent the night being held by the only man he'd ever found attractive, he'd be hard-pressed to wake completely flaccid. Panic doused over him.

Brutally slow, he eased himself off the consulting detective, taking care to lift his hips first. He squinted when Sherlock's expression morphed from aggravated into amused. Normally, he would have enjoyed the change in his look, but at the moment all he wanted was for Sherlock to be as oblivious in this matter as he desperately needed him to be.

"I'm going to get us some water and…and I'll put some tea on so…you stay here," John said, each word shooting a stab of pain down his throat. He avoided meeting Sherlock's eyes.

Sherlock shifted off the wall languidly as John scrambled to his feet.

"Don't move, I mean it," John snapped, far louder than necessary, turning before Sherlock could look him up and down. He plucked the empty cup from the floor and scurried out the door as fast as he could, glancing back only once.
As he made his way down the stairs to the kitchen, he prayed that he’d only imagined the knowing, and faintly smug, smirk he’d seen curling across Sherlock's lips.

Chapter End Notes

I only had a little French to translate for you this time, thank goodness. Why do I do these things to myself? Inherent masochism must just come with being a BBC Sherlock fan...
Chapter 6

Chapter Notes

This chapter was especially difficult to write, which also means it was the most rewarding to complete. I got kinda giddy when I wrote it, not gonna lie. Anyways, the thing is that I love you readers and I want to have your babies and name all of them Mycroft and feed them oodles of cake until they're fat and happy.

Oh, and if you're interested I drew up a lil cover for The Last Drop. You can take a gander at it here.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

John groaned when he pushed open the stairway door to the kitchen, having forgotten the hazardous state they'd left it in the night before. He vowed that this new-found compulsion to smash glass when agitated would not be permitted to stick. He felt like a bad parent, having exhibited poor behavior around a child who would inevitably imitate it.

Locating the closest pair of shoes not caked in crusted mud, John slipped them on and crossed into the battlefield that was their kitchen. Splinters of glass crunched beneath his soles with each step.

After a few desultory sweeps with the broom, corralling the shards into a far corner, he set about fixing tea. Every movement, however minor, felt like it was leeching the energy from him. He brushed the back of his hand across his burning forehead once the kettle was switched on, swaying on his feet. A few spots ghosted across his vision as he dropped the tea bags into the mugs. John barely made it to the nearest chair without fainting.

As he sat there, slouching with his thighs spread open, arms hanging at his sides, he started to get irritated. He was the doctor, the caregiver, damnit. How could he possibly cure Sherlock like he was supposed to when his constitution insisted on making the slightest task so bloody challenging? Every cell in his body was imploring him to return to bed, to slip between soft sheets, to bury his throbbing head in a pillow, to wrap his arms around the warm body waiting for him and damn his duties to hell.

"Alright, enough of that," he muttered to himself, wondering when he'd reverted into such a bloody teenager. Perhaps fevers just had that effect on him. It was unnerving, to say the least.

Setting his jaw with resolve, John pushed himself to his feet and turned towards the worktop. The kettle purred with the bubbling water inside of it, as if announcing its success. John plucked it from its stand, pouring the steaming contents into the mugs. He watched, transfixed, as tendrils of brown tea unfurled from the bags, dyeing the water. Something about the visual soothed him; an engrained emblem of comfort.

Once sifted, he prepared the tea just as each of them preferred. It was a process he could probably execute blindfolded if need be. He'd certainly had plenty of practice considering Sherlock could never be bothered with something so trivial as brewing tea, the lazy git.

As John retrieved the milk from the fridge, it occurred to him how stocked it was. He'd purchased a wide selection of groceries a few days earlier in an effort to get Sherlock to eat something,
anything, and while his original endeavor was unsuccessful, it at least insured that he wouldn't have to brave a Tesco's run while they rode out their fevers.

After filling a large glass with water, confident that Sherlock would have no problem sharing it, and taking up the mugs, John made his way for the stairs. He kicked off his shoes on the way.

By the time he made it to his doorway he was panting, the corners of his vision flashing in pale colors. He staggered to the nightstand, depositing the mugs and cup of water before he spilled them, and collapsed onto the bed.

"Almost fainted, there," he croaked, somewhat bashfully. He draped his forearm over his eyes and took a few centering breaths.

When he was satisfied that the wave of vertigo had dissipated, he slipped back beneath the covers, clasped the mugs, and handed one to Sherlock.

"Just how you like it," he exhaled on a sigh, letting his aching joints sink into the mattress. His fingers curled around the warm ceramic of his mug, and, closing his eyes, he paused to savor the much-needed comfort.

"How is it?" he asked after a moment, canting his head to look at Sherlock's face for the first time since his rather awkward departure. He was not prepared for Sherlock's expression.

"What?" Sherlock arched an eyebrow.

"Oh…right, I forgot you're a mute. And yes, thank you, don't bother doing the 'you're an idiot' look. I get it. I'm a little out of sorts, alright?"

Sherlock tilted his head in a fair effort at feigning innocence.

"Do you like the tea?" John asked, bringing the subject back and willing his ears to quit burning. "Nod, or whatever."

Sherlock nodded, but then his brow furrowed and he pointed a slender index finger in John's direction.

"What? Oh yes, I like mine, too." He took a sip in demonstration, some of the tension leaking from his shoulders when the warm liquid soothed down his throat.

In his periphery, he caught Sherlock shaking his head.

"Not it?" he asked, catching Sherlock's eyes and trying to read the intention behind him. Sherlock gazed into him like he was trying to communicate telepathically.

"Am…am I okay? Are you asking if I'm okay?"

Sherlock jerked his head in a quick nod.

"I'm fine. Just a bit tired, is all."
Sherlock arched an eyebrow, skepticism written in the movement.

"It's not like you to care," John grumbled, looking down into his tea and taking a sip. Sherlock sighed, exasperated, beside him. John hid a slight grin with his mug.

"So, what are we going to do today, since we can't very well move much from this bed?" Sherlock shrugged. "We'd better think of something because you're bound to start going crazy with boredom, if you haven't already."

Sherlock rolled his eyes and gulped down far too much tea at once, flinching and squeezing his eyes together.

"Easy," John murmured. He was rewarded with a withering glance. "Do you want to play a game?"

Sherlock's attention darted to him, a spark of inquisition in his opal eyes.

"I don't know what kind of game, it was just an idea." Sherlock deflated. "Now hold on, I'll think of something." He placed his mug back on the nightstand and weaved his fingers together on his chest. "Okay...you can't talk and we can't really move, so that narrows our options down a bit, doesn't it. We could play a question game, though it would be rather one-sided and I'm not sure if I'm ready for that again. Charades would require far too much effort, so no go. Um..."

Sherlock tapped on John's forearm, drawing his attention. "What is it?" With a focused stare, Sherlock pressed the pads of his thumb and index finger together and began miming writing on John's arm. The contact sent an unexpected, pleasant chill through him.

"Ah, right," he said, clearing his throat as gently as possible and turning away.

Still keeping his lower half on the bed, John stretched over the side and pulled open the drawer of his desk. He struggled, the elbow tethering him to the mattress starting to slip the further he reached. After a few fumbles with the contents of the drawer, his fingers closed around his notepad just as he lost his balance. A firm, warm hand gripped his waist, steadying and holding him back before he tumbled to the floor. With a grunt he let himself be pulled back onto the bed.

"Probably could have handled that better," he muttered, half-smiling. Sherlock patted his stomach mockingly before extracting the notepad from his grasp. He handed his mug to John without looking at him, almost dropping it right on his chest.

"Oi! Careful."

Sherlock ignored him, plucking the pen from the metal spiral binding of the notepad and flipping back the cover. He tensed, brow furrowing, hand suspending over the first page.

"What?" John asked, placing Sherlock's mug beside his own and turning on his side, facing him. He propped himself up and leaned close to get a good look at whatever had halted Sherlock so suddenly.

"Oh, my notes from, uh, that day. Here, I'll just rip them out," he grumbled, face flushing, and reached for the paper. Sherlock wrenched away, sliding from John and rotating over. "Sherlock, stop it! You already know what it says, you're just going to have a laugh at me." John gripped Sherlock's shoulder, pulling in an attempt to get him to roll back over. He squirmed, worming his way out of John's grasp and plastering himself against the wall.

John glared at his back, rigidly still for a moment. "I'm not tackling you again, Sherlock, I'm too tired. Please just give me the paper." His tone was so impressively flat, he'd give Sherlock a run for
his money.

Sherlock shook his head, dark curls bouncing.

"Please?" The word sounded even more sincere than he'd intended in his raspy voice.

Sherlock paused, and while could John couldn't see his face he could practically hear the warring thoughts in his head. After a moment, his shoulders sagged, and with a swift tear he ripped the page from the notepad, folding it and putting it somewhere John couldn't see. Rolling onto his back, he nestled into his pillows like nothing had happened.

"So, what's your big idea?" John asked, adjusting until he was comfortably on his side, right arm folded under his pillow, and looking up at Sherlock. He watched as the man uncapped his pen and started scribbling on the paper, holding it in front of John's face when he was finished.

*Guessing game*, it read.

"What kind of guessing game?"

Sherlock scratched the pen across the page again.

*I write something about myself, you guess if it's true or not. I guess something about you, you tell me if it's true or not.*

"Why?"

*Bored."

"It just seems like you have some kind of…hidden agenda or something."

*Why would you think that?*

"Because you usually do."

*Does it matter?*

"Um. No. I guess it doesn't. Alright, if that's what you want to do. I don't care as long as we have a kip after this." John offered a weak smile, blinking a few times.

Sherlock eyed him with a fathomless expression.

"Go ahead, then. And start small. I'm not exactly sure yet how you want this to work."

For a moment, John was positive Sherlock was going to shoot him his 'you're an idiot' glare, but all implications of it morphed into pensiveness. Sherlock tapped the pen against his lips a few times, eyes darting, unfocused, about the room in thought.

After a long moment, he wrote.

*I hate being sick.*

John stared, bemused, at the sentence.

"So you...you want me to guess if that's true or false?"

Sherlock looked at him like he was the most idiotic, devolved creature on the face of the planet.
"Hey, watch the looks or I'll quit. I'll just turn over and ignore you and let you entertain your bloody self for the rest of the day."

Sherlock's eyebrows pulled together. He looked borderline scandalized.

"Okay. As long as we're clear on that," John said, looking down to his fingers and twiddling them. "So I'm going to guess that's true, then."

He was rewarded with a curt nod, before Sherlock's attention darted back to the paper.

John's eyes bulged when the pad was turned towards him.

>You like that I'm sick.

"Of course I don't, Sherlock! How could you even suggest that?"

Sherlock sighed, scrawling an additional note.

>I mean you like taking care of me.

"I—well, no, that's not—I don't mind, for Christ's sake, I'm a doctor, but I'd rather you weren't sick, of course. I don't…I don't like it," John stammered, pushing up off the pillow. He prayed that the heat blossoming in his face, neck, and ears wasn't too obvious. Of course, Sherlock would notice it even if it wasn't.

>Relax.

"I am perfectly relaxed, damnit. Just…just clarifying, is all."

>Lie down before you pass out.

"I'm not going to pass out," John griped, but flopped back down anyways, curling on his side and trying not to pout. He huffed when the corner of Sherlock's lip quirked into a smirk.

>May I continue?

"Fine, fine."

>I don't like it when you take care of me.

John swallowed, resenting the swell of pain, and felt something clench in his chest.

"Easy: true," he said flatly, voice lowering.

Sherlock grimaced and shook his head.

"Oh, come on! You hate when I make you eat and sleep and take pills and—"

Sherlock thrust the notepad in front of his face.

>No.

"You do too, Sherlock."

Sherlock groaned, or at least tried to. What came out was a bizarre crackling sound followed by a fierce wince. Once the initial pain seemed to pass, his pen frantically scrawled across the page.
I find it irritating and cumbersome. Doesn't mean I don't appreciate it.

"Oh," John's voice cracked. He re-read the sentence to be sure. "I didn't...I'm surprised."

That's because you're an idiot.

John frowned.

"Well, your handwriting sucks."

Sherlock stared at him, expression impassive. Without breaking eye contact, he wrote one short word:

Sucks?

"I got defensive."

Clearly.

John wasn't sure if he or Sherlock was the first to start grinning. Regardless, once he saw his own mirth reflected on his flatmate's face, it seemed rather impossible to stop. He would have giggled if his swollen glands didn't forbid it.

"You're lucky I find you so endlessly amusing," John teased, still smiling.

He was broken out of his reverie when Sherlock scribbled another note and turned the notepad towards him.

Am I?

"Oh, very. It's definitely in your best interests to keep me around, so, try not to take me for granted, yeah?"

He offered Sherlock another smile, though it was unreturned.

You see but you do not observe.

John's eyes flickered across the words, his grin vanishing. When he looked back at Sherlock, a question on his lips, he was surprised to find a severe gaze boring down on him.

"It's true, I suppose. At least compared to you. Why do you say that now?"

Sherlock wrote more, ignoring John's response.

I am not good for you.

"Well, that's false. Absolutely false."

Sherlock, eyes gone cold even behind the burning haze of the fever, turned his head from side to side.

"What do you mean, 'no'?" John sat up, leaning on his hand and facing Sherlock.

Sherlock shook his head again, irritated by being forced to repeat himself.

"Where did that come from? What are you talking about?" John's voice betrayed him, the constant cracking and grittiness only making him sound more panicked. "Of course, you're good for me."
I am not. It is fact.

"It is not bloody fact. It's the opposite of fact."

I am merely playing the game.

"Game? What kind of game is this?"

Waiting for Sherlock to scrawl his reply was maddening. John's eyes flickered from Sherlock's to the pad, which was slanted away from him.

You think too much of me.

John growled, running his hand across his forehead. He tried to catch his breath, to slow his accelerating pulse.

"False again. Sherlock, I don't know what you're trying to accomplish, but I don't want to play anymore. This is giving me a headache."

Game or not, it's still true.

"Oh for God's—stop, alright? Just stop. You have a bad fever. It's making you—you need to rest."

John did his best to keep his voice level, but the anger was building. He covered his eyes with the heels of his palms, pressing too hard.

What was Sherlock playing at? It felt too much like John was being manipulated for some twisted experiment. The man was probably cataloguing his reactions to entertain himself.

Gradually, John slid his hands aside and braved a look at Sherlock's face. He, much to John's astonishment, was positively glowering at him.

John opened his mouth to say something but the words lodged in his throat. Sherlock, without breaking eye contact, scratched another sentence on the paper. It took more resolve than John anticipated to tear his gaze from Sherlock's face to see the note.

His chest bottomed out when he read it.

This cannot continue.

"Wh—what cannot continue?"

It is not satisfactory.

"You...you mean us?"

Sherlock nodded, his eyes spewing venom. John's heart thumped in his chest and he began to sweat. He felt completely blindsided.

As soon as the nib of Sherlock's pen pressed against the paper once more, John ripped the notepad from his grasp and chucked it, fluttering, across the room. He felt manic and frazzled and altogether furious.

He threw the covers away from himself, kicking and scrambling off the bed. A rush of inevitable dizziness flooded his head, which he ignored. He turned back to Sherlock, fists clenched at his side, posture rail straight. When he spoke, his tone was deep and commanding.
"I don't care if you can barely speak. If you have something to say to me, then you say it in your own voice, or you don't say it at all."

Sherlock sat up, sliding off the bed himself in one graceful movement. He stood in front of John, rising to his full height and looming over him, inappropriately close. His eyes were smoldering, brow crinkling with barely contained fury. The sight of it was so unexpected, so unfounded by John's perspective, that he could do nothing but glare right back and attempt to match his contempt. He'd never backed down to Sherlock before, not when it mattered, and he wasn't about to start.

His breathing was ragged, his heart pounding in his ears. Everything around him seemed to blur except for Sherlock's face, which blazed in vivid detail.

"Say it then, Sherlock. Stop with the vagueness, and the baiting, and the evasion and say whatever it is that you mean or shut up about—"

And John's thoughts went completely white, washed clean in an instant, for Sherlock had closed the small distance between them and pressed their lips together.

For the first and last time in his life, John Watson fainted.
Chapter 7

Chapter Notes

Well, this was waaaay too much fun to write. I actually gave myself butterflies...this is a new low, isn't it...and by 'low' I, of course, mean 'high.'

See the end of the chapter for more notes

John waited for the hard impact of the floor to crack into his spine, but it did not come. Instead, once the white light receded into black, John felt, as though from afar, that he was being laid down on something soft. He groaned, the thunderous ache in his head seeming to leak out from his ears and onto the pillow cradling his head. He began to settle, every bit of his body washed with relief at being horizontal.

The first few times he blinked, he saw nothing, just echoes of muffled light.

"Sher-" he heard his own voice murmur.

John blinked again with more conviction

A glistening blue-grey was the first thing he saw, was aware of. It was pouring into him, filling his head with cool, soothing ribbons. Familiar, yet inherently alien.

One more blink and John's full sight returned to him.

Sherlock's face was close to his own, taking up his whole field of vision. He loomed over John, sitting beside his hip, pressed up against it, with his legs bent over the edge of the bed. His hands were braced on the mattress at John's sides.

"Wha—" John choked, overwhelmed with a flood of disorientation.

Sherlock, eyes still piercing, brought his warm palm to rest on John's forehead. He attempted speech, mouthing something, which John did not have the cognition to decipher. He sighed, clearly frustrated by his current disability, and threaded his fingers into John's hair, pushing it back.

And then Sherlock was gone, launching himself off the bed. John had a fleeting, instinctual moment of panic. He wanted to call out, to beckon back the grey spheres, but something in the back of his mind, the rational part of him, held his mouth shut.

To John's relief, Sherlock returned only a moment later, sitting beside him again with the notepad in hand. He scribbled on it and held it up to John's face.

Are you alright?

John cleared his throat, the pain from it sharpening his focus, bringing him back to himself.

"Yeah, I'm...I'm fine, just confused. What happen—" and then, as though the question on his lips triggered the answer, John remembered.

His eyes widened and he pushed himself up on his pillow as much as his lightheadedness would
allow. Sherlock placed a hand on his shoulder, holding him down gently, though John had no intention of sitting up any further.

"Sherlock, you—you kissed me!"

Sherlock held his eyes for a moment, his own deep yet unreadable, before scrawling another message.

**Brilliant observation.**

John felt a spark of annoyance, ire still lingering from their fight.

"Don't you dare get snarky with me right now, Sherlock Holmes." John breathed in deep, shaky breaths, swallowing before he spoke again. "You—you were angry, furious really, so where did—why did—bloody hell, you kissed me! Out of nowhere. I mean...are you...I just...why?"

Sherlock rolled his eyes and wrote.

**Well articulated.**

"Answer me!" John was impressed with the amount of force he was able to put behind the words, though his ragged throat objected. Sherlock didn't appear intimidated but wrote with a fraction more haste.

**You were being oblivious.**

"Oblivious." John recited the word like he'd never heard it before.

Sherlock nodded, looking almost bored. John felt a swell of defensiveness and an instinctual compulsion to guard himself against Sherlock. He felt exposed, belittled, manipulated.

"And tell me, Sherlock, did you ever consider the possibility that maybe I didn't want you to kiss me?"

A pause. John waited, staring and trembling very slightly, his whole being buzzing with trepidation.

Sherlock exhaled in blatant irritation as he wrote his reply.

**Extensively.**

Sherlock glanced up at John as he read the word. Before John harnessed the ability to respond, another note was scrawled and held in front of his face.

**Though I did not anticipate that you'd be quite so affected.**

"A-affected? What are you talking about? I wasn't—I-"

*Do you usually faint when someone kisses you or was that reaction specific to our interaction?*

John sputtered, flushing red and frantically shaking his head back and forth.

"That's not why I fainted!"

Sherlock raised a skeptical eyebrow, a twitch at the corner of his lips betraying a poor effort to keep from smirking.
"It's not, damnit. Did you forget that I'm sick?"

Sherlock exhaled in a way that sounded very much like 'ah.' He looked far too pleased with himself as he scrawled his response.

So, specific to me then.

John tried to laugh at Sherlock's arrogance but his voice shook too much for it to have the effect he was going for. At the sound, pathetic as it was, he felt a sudden desperation to shift the power back in his favour.

"You arrogant son of a-do you actually believe that you could make me faint from a kiss like that?"

The corner of Sherlock's eye twitched and his head jerked back. John noted how bird-like Sherlock could be at times. He watched Sherlock's lips part as though he'd forgotten his inability to speak, before his expression closed off again. Adjusting the pen between his fingertips, he wrote slowly, glaring at John throughout.

If my intention had been to make you swoon like a Victorian heroine, I assure you, you would not feel the need to pose that question.

John felt his whole face and neck blossom with sudden heat, bringing with it a swell of dizziness.

"What the hell is that supposed to mean?"

Sherlock arched an eyebrow.

"I fainted because I have a fever, Sherlock. Your lips had nothing to do with it."

For a long, agonizing moment they glared at each other, John doing his utmost to appear confident and unfazed by how appallingly close Sherlock's face still was to his own.

When Sherlock's eyes flashed with an all-too-recognizable glint of epiphany, John knew he was in real trouble. He clenched his jaw as Sherlock scratched two words onto the notepad:

Prove it.

John blinked, eyes darting back and forth from the paper to Sherlock.

"H-how?" As soon as the word left his mouth he regretted it. This line of conversation was barreling towards very dangerous ground, and a question like that would only propel it faster. Worse yet, John could not decide if he wanted to or not.

Sherlock's eyes flickered to John's lips, his intent clear in the gesture. A shock of anticipation went right down John's spine, and he licked his lips, which was probably not the best course of action if he meant to deter Sherlock.

"This is a terrible idea," John said, barely above a whisper.

A tiny voice in his brain made a final effort to conjure up all the reasons why he should turn away, should change the subject and pretend like nothing had happened while the situation was still salvageable. But as soon as he let his eyes lock with the hypnotizing pattern of blue, grey, green, and even gold, flecking Sherlock's irises, John lost the ability to think rationally. He knew there were reasons, good ones too, but a much louder voice shouting 'do it' over and over again drowned them out.
Was this the moment he'd been waiting for? He had done a pretty stand-up job of ignoring and suppressing his feelings for his flatmate. Of course, that was mostly due to the fact he didn't much understand those feelings beyond the unavoidable certainty that they existed, and that in itself was daunting enough. Yet, Sherlock had kissed him, had crossed the threshold they'd both been skirting for months, and now it was John's move. An undercurrent of each and every possible repercussion that could be wrought by this mistake teemed beneath the surface of his desire, his immediate and reckless yearnings.

He couldn't lose Sherlock Holmes, and kissing could very well be the quickest way to insure the implosion of their relationship.

He took a deep breath, shaking his head, before he spoke.

"Fuck it."

And John leaned forward until Sherlock's soft lips met his own.

For a long moment their eyes stayed open, locked and wide, while their lips touched. They were stuck in a kind of bizarre, static limbo, tense and frozen together.

And then it was as though something clicked, or rather sparked, between them.

In unison, they relaxed into each other, hands finding purchase and lips slotting together. It was a moment of clarity, of things falling into place in perfect order. John felt an incredible sense of focus, all fears of whether or not he was making the right choice dissolving into the feel of warm, soft skin. He inhaled deep into his lungs, filling himself with the overwhelming scent and taste of Sherlock. The effect was immediate, a swarm of tingling sensation unfurling from his chest and spreading all the way to his fingertips and toes.

With one hand woven into the curls at Sherlock's nape, the other clasping his waist, John tilted his head and deepened the kiss. Sherlock's palms were on the sides of John's neck, his thumbs tracing back and forth on the skin below his sideburns, inducing faint shivers with each caress. Tentatively, he parted his lips against Sherlock's, taking that familiar Cupid's bow between them and sucking.

A barely audible, crackling moan broke from Sherlock's throat before he pushed forward, pressing John back into the pillow. John's hand on Sherlock's waist slid, wrapping around the thin musculature of Sherlock's back and drawing him as close as their positions would allow. When John flipped back Sherlock's robe and found the hem of his t-shirt, he felt Sherlock shiver in his arms. Gradually, he teased his fingers beneath the fabric, finding hot, smooth skin and tracing slow circles. His hand slithered up to Sherlock's ribs and held.

Timidly, John teased the tip of his tongue against Sherlock's plump bottom lip in a silent request for passage. Lips parting, one of Sherlock's palms moved to clasp the nape of John's neck and pull him closer, encouraging. John didn't hesitate. In one, slick move he plunged his tongue into Sherlock's mouth, sliding against the other man's.

A rush of butterflies fluttered in John's chest at the intimate contact, his head whirling. He gasped for breath, suddenly overwhelmed, and pulled his tongue back. Sherlock, oblivious to John's strong reaction, pursued him. His tongue pushed into John's mouth, meeting his again in deft strokes, stripping John of his senses with each pass.

To say John did not anticipate such a level of skill from his chaste, supposedly inexperienced flatmate would be a gross understatement. John was baffled, devastated, and caught entirely off-guard. He felt faint.
And then Sherlock's hand clawed down the front of his shirt, catching a nipple through fabric on the way and sending an electrifying jolt of pleasure in its wake. It moved lower until it met with the strip of skin between shirt and pyjama bottoms. Sherlock's digits, long and clever and purposeful, moved against the skin of John's stomach. And then, the tip of Sherlock's index finger hooked under the band of John's pants, and John lost it.

In one swift, startling movement, John shoved Sherlock away from him and rolled over, sending the poor, wide-eyed detective tumbling to the floor in a heap of limbs and blue silk.

For a while, John stayed on his side, facing away from where Sherlock lay sprawled and fighting to catch his breath. Bright spots danced in his vision. He tried to calm down, to center himself but the strong taste of Sherlock on his tongue did little to slow his heartrate.

He pressed the heels of his palms against his eyes, breathing finally slowing to an acceptable pace as the spots began to dissipate and he came back to himself.

Unfortunately, once he got his body in check his brain also came back online, and he realized what he'd done.

"Sherlock?" John asked, squinting in apprehension and gripping his hair between his fingers as he turned back over.

Sherlock, in a flawless impression of a meerkat slowly rising out of its hole, peeked over the side of the bed. His expression was what could best be described as incredulous, brow furrowed and jaw set, though his lips were still pink from kissing and dulled the effect.

"I—," John began, and then shut his mouth. He had no idea what to say. He cleared his throat and unclenched his hands, raking them back through his hair. Propping himself up on his elbows, he looked down at Sherlock. "I'm sorry, I got…dizzy…"

As soon as the word left his mouth Sherlock's eyebrows shot up, a look of triumph spreading across his features. Well, shit, John thought.

Sherlock fumbled around the ground, in search of something John couldn't see. When he heard the familiar scratching of pen nib on paper he realized what it was. A few seconds later the notepad popped of over the edge of the bed where John could read it.

So I was right.

John sighed heavily, falling back onto the pillow in a whoosh of air.

"You usually are," he conceded, wiping his hands over his face. "But I still say I'm only this…susceptible…because I'm sick." Even to himself he didn't sound convincing.

After a deep breath he spoke again, trying to make his words as direct as possible. "Please come back up here. I'm sorry I kicked you off the bed."

Sherlock scuttled to his feet and hopped back onto the mattress, crawling over John and tumbling onto his side. He kept the notepad in hand and began writing again as soon as he was settled beneath the covers, pulling them over John as well in the process.

That was most satisfactory.

He held it out to John, but quickly pulled it back before adding:
"Stop apologising.

John glanced at Sherlock who was fixing him with the 'you're being too human again John' look.

"I—I just wasn't expecting—you said you'd never—," and John broke off with a growl, furious with himself for sounding like such a blithering idiot. Sherlock seemed to get the gist of his point regardless for he was already scribbling away.

I have always made an effort to cultivate a variety of experiences deemed necessary to the work. Physical intimacy is not something I'm unfamiliar with, nor do I lack the skills to be considered competent in such an area.

"But…but Mycroft said…you said—"

Sherlock shook his head, cutting John off.

I said I'd never been in a relationship. Any previous sexual encounters were for the purposes of gathering data. Hence, why Mycroft made his own incorrect deductions. Sex does not alarm me.

He paused, tapping the capped end of the pen against lips a few times before adding:

I have never been intimate with someone who could be identified as more than an acquaintance. Until now, of course.

"Oh," John said. He attempted to collect his thoughts, to process what he'd read while ignoring the lingering blush burning on his cheeks. Unfortunately, no matter what he did he just couldn't get his reactions into any semblance of order. He said the first thing that came to mind: "Well, I've never been with a...a man, you know...before."

Sherlock stared at him, evidently unimpressed by the information John had offered him. Clearly, he'd been aware of it already.

Suddenly, it all felt like too much. John couldn't think, didn't want to anymore, and the rush of adrenaline and endorphins from their kiss had left a crushing detritus of exhaustion in their wake. His head was throbbing, reminding him in no uncertain terms that he was, in fact, sick with a raging fever, and needed to sleep.

"I don't feel so good," he groaned, shutting his eyes tight and rolling onto his side towards Sherlock. He heard the notepad get placed somewhere, before Sherlock shifted down beside him.

When he opened his eyes, Sherlock's face was just centimeters from his own, though still resting on his own pillow.

"Okay?" the consulting detective mouthed.

John, whose vision was starting to spin, swirls of aching dizziness fogging his thoughts, acted on impulse. He pressed a light, long kiss to Sherlock's lips, tucking his nose between Sherlock's and the pillow, before pulling back a fraction and shutting his eyes again.

Within moments he was asleep, the scent of Sherlock's breath in his nose and the taste of
Sherlock's lips on his own.

Chapter End Notes

To all of you readers and commenters and kudos-ers: Oh, hot damn. You are my jam. Keep me Sherlock'n til the A.M.
Chapter 8

Chapter Notes

Sooooo this was meant to be the last chapter buuuut it sort of expanded beyond my control. There will be (so help me, Godtiss) just one more chapter to 'The Temper Between' before I move onto the final installment in this trilogy (Oh, it's going to be a trilogy btw...I forgot I'd never mentioned that before...OR DID I...? Baha, of course I didn't. So yes. This will be a trilogy. I like trilogies. Trilogies are good).

See the end of the chapter for more notes

When John woke he was alone. The sheets were cool, having been vacated by Sherlock some time before, and the bedclothes on his side were neatly folded. If it weren't for the scent of him, so thoroughly threaded into the bedding, there would have been no evidence to suggest the detective had been there at all.

John sighed, unable to fight the cold wrench of disappointment in his chest, but resigned himself to the reality that Sherlock's absence should have been expected. Sherlock couldn't bear to stay still for more than a few minutes with nothing engaging to fixate over. He'd also probably guessed John had a long and thorough conversation planned for the two of them, fleeing before John had the chance to corner him. Sherlock avoided emotional conversations as he did any chore, for that's what they were to him: a chore.

Or there was the possibility that he'd just recovered enough to return to his routine. While that was probably not the case, and Sherlock was just over-exerting himself as usual, John couldn't ignore the perplexing disappointment evoked at the thought. He'd been honest when he'd said he didn't like seeing Sherlock sick. Of course he didn't. But he couldn't help but worry that their recent intimacy was restricted to fever-induced bed-sharing. Perhaps a fever rendered Sherlock sentimental, and he'd harden his cold shell as soon as it broke. Come to think of it, John had nothing to guarantee that their newfound affection would bleed into everyday life, without the necessity of exchanging body heat to keep them close.

Despite his doubt, which was nauseating, John vowed to pursue the man until he knew exactly where they stood. Elusion would not do in this situation. They'd moved well past that option when Sherlock's lips moved against his own. His sanity depended on clarification, on set terms, even if his stringency resulted in a return to the platonic. Platonic was better than nothing.

For a moment, he thought about getting up and marching downstairs to confront Sherlock, but abandoned the idea full-stop. His joints ached, his head pounded, his throat burned. Sleeping had been necessary but he was still just as sick as ever. A relationship conversation would have to wait for the time being. Besides, he knew where Sherlock slept, whether in his own bed or John's, so he couldn't shirk him forever.

Unfortunately, just as John turned over, pulling both the duvets up to his ears and burrowing into his pillow, his body saw fit to remind him that he had not, in fact, used a toilet in several hours. He groaned, the realization that he had to go serving to make it impossible to ignore.

With a surrendering breath he threw the covers from his body, swinging his legs over the side of the bed and pushing himself to his feet. Wooziness forced him to take a few moments to compose...
himself, before he straightened his pyjamas and headed down the stairs.

He avoided the sitting room, taking the path through the kitchen to get to the bathroom. He needed to be as undistracted as possible when he finally did confront Sherlock.

"John?" he heard called out to him softly in a very scratchy voice. It had come from vaguely the direction of the sofa.

"Bathroom," John stated in reply, not hesitating in his trajectory.

So, Sherlock had some of his voice back, then. Somehow it wasn't a relief, but rather an inexplicable confirmation that their kissing had been a temporary fancy. It didn't seem plausible that the man who owned that deep, familiar, cutting drawl would utter those things scribed on a notepad upstairs.

Once he'd relieved himself, washed his face, and brushed his teeth, doing his best to ignore how shattered he looked in the mirror, he made his way to the sitting room. He pushed his shoulders back and set his jaw, defensive nature kicking in.

Sherlock was sprawled out on the sofa cushions, his eyes tired, skin more pallid than usual and a book fanned out on his chest. He blinked at John when he sat on the coffee table beside him.

"You look terrible, Sherlock. What the hell are you doing down here?"

"You were sleeping. Got bored." His voice, while improved from earlier simply because he had one, was painful to listen to.

"You usually wake me up when you're bored."

"You're sick."

John swallowed. If he didn't know better he'd say that sounded like caring behaviour. It was unnerving.

"Have you eaten anything?"

Sherlock opened his mouth to reply, but John interrupted him.

"And just nod yes or no, you shouldn't be speaking yet."

Sherlock shook his head against the fleur-de-lis cushion.

"Drank anything?"

Another head shake.

"Jesus Chr—get back in my bed right now," John ordered, standing less gingerly than he should have and pointing to the stairwell.

"Pushy. We've only just kissed."

John blushed. Apparently Sherlock would not be going the way of feigned ignorance when it came to what had transpired between them.

He tried to push on as though he hadn't heard the comment, but his capillaries continued to betray him.
"There's a lot of left-over soup in the fridge since you refused to eat it a couple days ago. I'll bring some up to you as long as you get back in bed."

"I'm fine here, thanks."

"Sherlock…," John warned, putting his hands on hips.

"It's only logical. You might faint aga—" Sherlock broke off in a coughing fit, having pushed his throat past its limit.

"Sorry, I didn't catch that over the sound of you proving my point."

Once Sherlock had the coughing under control, he fixed John with a narrowed stare, cleared his throat, and spoke again.

"I'll go up when you do."

John eyed him, wishing he still had the strength to carry the idiot upstairs and tie him to the bloody bed. Unfortunately the thought of binding Sherlock to his headboard provided an appealing, and thoroughly flustering, visual. John had to get it right out of his head before he lost his train of thought.

"Fine. Do what you want. You always do," he groused, throwing his hands up in the air and shuffling into the kitchen.

John wasn't quite as up to preparing a meal as he thought he was, dizziness sinking deeper in his head just as he poured the left-over soup into a pot and lit the burner. A few wisps of light danced across his vision, and he swayed on his feet. Groaning, he reached for the worktop to anchor himself, but fumbled unsuccessfully. Just as he was about to tip over, he found himself caught at the hips and steadied.

"Ah, and is that the sound of you proving my point as well?" Sherlock's croaky voice said in his ear, breath ghosting over it and sending a chill down John's spine. He swallowed against his swollen glands, heart rate accelerating. Still, he refused to turn around.

He felt the tip of Sherlock's nose slide across his hairline, the slender fingers on his hips loosening their grip but continuing to hold. Leisurly, they started to trail downwards. He could feel each fingertip through the thin layer of his cotton pyjamas as though they were branding him, scorching a path of tingling sensation in their wake.

"Sh-sherlock," John's voice cracked, his composure draining out of him, and doing little to soothe his light-headedness. "We have to talk," he managed to choke out, causing the warm body pressing up behind him to freeze.

"Talk," Sherlock spewed as though it was a curse. His body went rigid on the word.

"Yes, 'talk,' Sherlock." Fingers fell from John's waist, the warm breath and body withdrawing.

John sucked in a breath and turned around. Sherlock was still standing very close to him, but he was cold, closed off, neutral.

"Don't give me that look. You knew this was coming."

"I was being optimistic that you wouldn't dwell on trivialities." Sherlock's voice was disintegrating with every word, becoming gritty to the point where John could barely understand him.
"This is a… delicate situation, Sherlock. We can't just wing it and hope we don't muck it up. And I told you to stop talking."

Sherlock released a long, exasperated sigh. John could tell from his petulant expression that a brooding session was imminent.

"But, for now, I am just going to worry about feeding you and getting you back in my b—back in bed. So, maybe no, uh, touching until then, yeah?"

Sherlock arched an eyebrow.

"No touching," he echoed.

"No touching."

"What if you're about to faint? Should I just let you fall?" Sherlock countered, tone growing louder.

"Then I'll just have to not faint."

A frown flitted across Sherlock's brow, but then it changed, replaced by a familiar glint sprouting in his irises. He'd found a challenge. John fought the urge to scoff at him.

Sherlock seemed to read it in him anyways, for his glare narrowed in determination.

He leaned in, closing the small distance between them, stopping when his mouth was just centimeters from John's. John could feel the heat coming from his body, though they were not touching. He trembled helplessly, hoping Sherlock would read it as nothing more than shivers from his fever.

"That's tremendously ambitious of you," Sherlock taunted, barely above a whisper. His voice, crackling and low, rumbled in his John's chest. He could taste Sherlock's breath in his mouth, which was minty, so he must have brushed his teeth while John was sleeping, but still thick with that flavor that was uniquely Sherlock. The combination was lethal to John's coherence.

"I—you—"

"Soup's ready."

"What?"

Sherlock's eyes darted to the stove and then back to John.

"Oh—Oh! Right. Soup. Yeah."

Sherlock stepped back as John turned towards the stovetop, shaking himself a bit and turning off the burner. He poured the soup into two bowls, added respective spoons, and looked back at Sherlock. He was met with an incredulous gaze. John's ears pinked and he busied himself by filling two glasses with water. The sight of them sparked a forgotten memory, however, and he turned on Sherlock.

"Wait, where did all the broken glass go?"

Sherlock pointed to the bin.

"Did you clean it up?"
"Mrs. Hudson did."

"Oh," said John, mildly disappointed. Apparently Sherlock's vulnerable fever state did not make him any more privy to household chores. "That was nice of her."

Sherlock shrugged, looking unimpressed.

"Well, here, take your soup and drink," John continued, handing them to Sherlock. He obeyed, but eyed John with a strange expression. "Up, you go." John gave him a weak push before picking up his own bowl and cup, and following.

Climbing the stairs, while keeping the soup from spilling, was draining, and from the slow pace Sherlock was employing, he must have felt it too.

By the time they crawled beneath the covers of John's bed, getting comfortable with bowls in hand and drinks on John's nightstand, they were both panting.

"This is annoying," John said between breaths. Sherlock nodded beside him.

Once they were breathing normally they each swallowed a spoonful of soup.

"Good?"

Sherlock nodded, the corner of his lip twitching with a quick smile.

For the most part they ate in silence, John gently encouraging Sherlock to have more when he slowed down, or offering the occasional grievance over their shared illness. Sherlock didn't speak at all, which was good considering he was well on his way to losing his voice again.

"Alright," John began once their empty dishes were piled on the bedside table. "Time to talk."

"You told me not to talk."

"Time to listen then. I'll ask you 'yes' or 'no' questions, so you can just nod."

"Why can't I just use this?" Sherlock asked, pulling out the notepad from somewhere unseen.

"I—oh. Or that."

Sherlock offered the most formidable eye roll John had ever witnessed. Still, despite his exasperation, he gave him his full attention. Unfortunately, Sherlock's full attention had a bewildering effect on John, so parsing out thoughts into coherent statements became considerably more challenging.

"Right. So, we…kissed."

Sherlock scrawled a note.

*Good of you to notice.*

"Don't be a smart arse. This is important. As I was saying, we kissed and you were…well, quite…proficient at it, which I didn't expect, so, uh, given that you aren't quite as demure as I thought you were, what, *exactly*, are you expecting from…this," John said, indicating between the two of them with a flick of his wrist.

Sherlock exhaled, pausing before writing his response.
I have no expectations.

John's chest ached with a sudden sinking feeling upon seeing the words. He wasn't sure why. It wasn't as though he had some long list of his own relationship expectations hidden in his pyjama pocket.

"Right, so you don't want like…a relationship, then." John was happy his voice was already croaky from the cold so he didn't sound quite as deflated as he felt. "It was just an experiment."

For a moment, he got lost in his thoughts, scowling, unfocused, at the duvet. Sherlock had to tap his forearm to catch his attention.

We already have a relationship.

"Yeah, I know, but I mean a…romantic relationship. That's not something you want from me."

There is little to distinguish our current relationship from a romantic one.

"There's plenty, Sherlock. We don't kiss, we don't have sex, we don't—" He cut himself off when he saw Sherlock writing fervently.

We have kissed. I was of the understanding there was an established progression to physical intimacy. Sex is merely a step we have not yet reached, surely.

John's whole face blossomed with heat, his pulse beating loudly in his ears.

You're embarrassed. Why?

"Well, come on, you can hardly blame me. Twenty four hours ago we were very platonic flatmates. It's…it will take me a moment to adjust to the idea of—uh—" When he couldn't finish the sentence John chided himself, wondering when he'd become such a bloody prude that he couldn't even say the word 'sex' to his best friend.

Waste of time.

"What?" John abruptly felt his hackles rise. Sherlock could discount his feelings on most things without significant protest, but this was far too critical. He'd had friendships fall apart from much less.

When he looked at the notepad, he was surprised to find Sherlock making a list.

1.) We cohabitate a joint living space.

2.) We have combined finances

3.) We spend the vast majority of our time together

4.) We share similar interests, life styles, senses of humour

5.) You have repeatedly fantasised about me sexually

6.) I have, on occasion, found myself doing the same

Conclusion: the only distinction between our current relationship and a romantic one is physical intimacy, and since kissing between us has been so mutually satisfying, I see no cause for hesitation or acclimatisation.
John read over the text twice before he allowed himself any kind of response. His mind, in an effort to deflect from actually addressing Sherlock's argument, latched onto a singular point.

"Hey—how do you know I fantasised about you? There's no way you could possibly know that."

Sherlock looked amused, as though John's ignorance to the extent of his abilities was almost… sincere. When he wrote his reply, there was a kind of serenity to the movement of his pen, and he never paused on a word to contemplate his phrasing. He simply wrote, determined and steady.

_I first became suspicious when you displayed jealousy, one of the clearest indicators of sexual attraction, during our interactions with Irene Adler. Don't try to deny it. The signs were clear. It is hardly customary for a member of a platonic friendship to count the number of text messages the other is receiving from an acquaintance. She also hinted of your interest on numerous occasions to me, and while I'm confident that I know your character far better than she does, she did present some rather hermetic arguments._

Regardless of her interference, you also exhibit obvious physical signs when in close proximity with me: dilation of pupils, flushed ears and face, shortness of breath, accelerated heart rate, etc. Furthermore, you prematurely jumped to the conclusion that we'd kissed during our shared night of inebriation, indicating that it was not only a viable option to you, but one you assumed you'd undergone when your reservations were down. Plus, there are the far more suggestive facts that you moan my name in your sleep and have become partially erect from touching me.

_Given the evidence, it was safe to assume you have contemplated sexual activity with me on one, if not multiple, occasions. I would not have kissed you if I wasn't absolutely certain of it._

A long silence settled between them.

John felt sideswiped, a cold, barbed humiliation settling in his stomach. Had he been so obvious? With two short paragraphs Sherlock had stripped him of any power or hidden card he might have held to guard himself. He was exposed. Worse, he hadn't the faintest where Sherlock was coming from, while the man clearly had John's feelings mapped to the letter.

Sherlock saw his body as transport, as a vehicle that needed certain tedious requirements, which he would neglect at every possible opportunity. The most he knew of Sherlock's sex life was that he'd never been in a relationship, but was apparently not totally inexperienced, and that the work took precedence over any romantic entanglements.

The chances of them coming to an equally satisfying agreement by the end of this conversation were starting to look very poor indeed.

But, and this was a big 'but,' Sherlock had said he was sexually attracted to John. Had written it, which seemed even more definite. John, as much as wanted to, couldn't fight the spark of hope at the thought.

"Brilliant, as usual, but I suppose I'm not the enigma in this one, am I? You told me, several times, that any kind of…sexual relationship would be a distraction for you. And then you said that I wasn't a distraction, so of course that must mean you aren't attracted to me-"

Sherlock held out a hand to stop him, writing swiftly with the other.

_You are a distraction when you are not with me, for all I can think of is how I'd prefer you were._

"Oh." Before John could wrap his head around Sherlock's words, the man continued.
It is only rational that our relationship progress to the next level, which happens to be of a sexual variety. I am quite certain that you are the only person I can bear to be in the company of for any length of time. An established commitment between us would eliminate the existence of your jealousy, as well as the presence of your insipid, pointless female conquests. It must also be reiterated that I very much enjoyed kissing you and would like to do so again once you stop having your sexuality crisis and come to terms with the inescapable logic of my reasoning.

John was vaguely aware that his mouth was hanging open. He'd been in quite a few relationships, long term or otherwise, but he'd never had a partner approach one the way Sherlock was. He knew he should have expected as much, considering Sherlock approached nothing the way normal people would, but he still felt flummoxed.

And yet, Sherlock had made it so abundantly simple, hadn't he? He'd been honest, reasonable, and thorough, having contemplated their position to a great extent. The only point he'd made that was off the mark was his assertion that John would promptly undergo a 'sexuality crisis' at his words. It was almost funny. Sure, he'd been through one, having found the only man in the world he could ever view as attractive and then moved in with him, but he'd come to terms with that as soon as they'd kissed. For all his exploits with women, nothing had ever come close to that.

No, John was quite comfortable with defining himself as 'Sherlock-sexual,' for complete lack of a better term.

"Alright," he said simply, shrugging before weaving his fingers together on his stomach.

"Alright?" Sherlock asked aloud. His voice crackled but held steady.

John canted his head to the side to meet Sherlock's eyes with a wide, silly grin on his face. He was sure he looked ridiculous but couldn't be bothered to hide it. This thing he'd been battling with, fussing over, dreaming about, and hiding from was finally out in the open, flushed out and picked clean.

The relief was paramount.

Sherlock seemed fleetingly surprised by his expression, but quickly offered a smile of his own. It was real and genuine and lit something dazzling in those ethereal grey spheres.

"May I kiss you now?" he rasped.

Sherlock's request, so uncharacteristically civil and gracious, lit a flare of arousal right through John's chest and belly.

As an answer, John grabbed a fist-full of Sherlock's robe, pulled him in, and latched their lips together in one swift motion. Sherlock startled for a moment but quickly acclimated, snaking an arm around John's waist as they slid lower on the bed, heads resting on one pillow.

When Sherlock broke their kiss and John's eyes blinked open to see why, he found a familiar smirk on the detective's lips.

"Knew you'd see it my way," he whispered breathily.

John smiled back, finding he couldn't be irritated with Sherlock at that moment even if he tried.

"No, you didn't. You guessed."

"I never guess."
"Yes you do."

"You fainted."

"Coincidently."

"There are no coincidences."

"Sherlock?"

"What."

"Stop talking."

Chapter End Notes

I feel I should warn you that the next chapter will contain some sexy times. I have received a few messages thanking me for keeping porn out of my fic, and while I'm very pleased you've enjoyed their exclusively mental witty-banter-mind-sex up until now, I'm afraid it's time for me to go ahead and utilize this M rating. Nothing too graphic, though. Very vanilla, and I promise to avoid words like "cock" and "fuck" (do I promise? I think I do. No, I don't. Yes, I do. Oh, fuck my cock, I'm indecisive...).

'Thank you' does not begin to cover the extent of loyalty and love that lays behind my cold mask for you readers/commenters/kudos-ers. I'd jump off a hospital, fake my own death, and live a lonely, wandering existence if it meant you wouldn't get shot in the face by my arch nemesis' gay lover. I mean it.
Chapter 9

Chapter Notes

Um...so...I kinda accidentally sorta wrote straight-up fucking porn. That was not the plan, I assure you. I wanted vanilla. I wanted subtlety. I wanted metaphor and delicate suggestion. But what did I write when I got the damn pen in my hand? Smut. I'm gonna go ahead and blame John and Sherlock for this. They told me to do it. I had no choice. Ahhhhhhh, son of a diphthong...well...I hope you enjoy!

Oh, and it's also an obscenely long chapter for me. Another whoops. I am made of fail (and burritos).

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

With both their heads settled on the shared pillow, and Sherlock, for once in his life, obeying a request for silence, John found himself pausing to absorb the image of the face so close to his own.

Perhaps it was the heavy influence of the fever or the blood rushing through his veins, but it felt, to John, as though he could truly perceive the man before him. While John did have an inherent ability to read Sherlock better than anyone else, that still meant he was only wading in the shallow end of a pool that extended fathoms deeper than his reach. The instances when he felt like he fully comprehended Sherlock Holmes were very scarce, indeed.

At the thought, he couldn't help but conjure the memory of their night at The Last Drop pub. The powerful clarity he'd had for those few special moments, when Sherlock's deduction process and relentless, surging genius revealed their nature to him, were still fresh in his mind. Of course, he'd been rather altered at the time, but that didn't stop the rare memory from imprinting itself on him. He'd latched onto it, cradled it deep inside himself like a secret. And perhaps it was; one he was certain no one else knew or ever would know.

Yet, the Sherlock before him now was different. Rather than having epiphanies of a tempest, of a sun, behind those sea glass eyes, John found him to be decadently serene. It was a demeanor not unlike the wash of gentle calm that always overtook the detective after he'd solved a particularly titillating case, but still different. Inverted, even.

John worried his lip, trying to uncover exactly what it was that set this mood apart, disappointed that his lucidity towards Sherlock was starting to slip away. What the hell is in that head? he asking himself, frustrated. When he swallowed against his aching glands, the pain triggered realization.

Sherlock looked as though he'd put something together rather than pulled it apart.

It was a staggering idea, for it went against the core of what he knew of the detective's process: he took complexity, ripped it down to its details, and laid it bare in a progression of merciless logic. And then, once the equation was simplified and solved, Sherlock would experience that short period of respite. And God, did John crave those times when that great mind was sated and dormant, for Sherlock's attention would always shift to him.

It was common during those times to find the detective handing John a cup of tea (shocking), or
bearing one of his favourite films with minimal complaint. He'd sit close to him on the sofa, head lolling to the side and resting on John's shoulder when the pent-up exhaustion finally claimed him. John remembered every one of those moments perfectly, the comfort of Sherlock's warm body pressed up beside him, making him ask himself questions he'd never imagined would be answered. It was like Sherlock really saw John during those brief lulls. He wasn't just an instrument or an assistant, then.

Of course, the ebb would inevitably give and Sherlock would slip into his cankerous, consuming fits of boredom. John would sigh, gathering up all the patience he could muster, and bear the brunt of it, praying for a damn-interesting case to fall in their laps before things got too dire. People always seemed to wonder how John could stand Sherlock when he got like that. He would just shrug in response and act as though he hadn't the faintest, though he knew perfectly well why.

The black moods were always worth it for the lulls.

And yet, for all the familiarity John had with Sherlock's ups and downs, the kind of tranquility Sherlock was displaying now was fast becoming confusing. It seemed much, much deeper, less temporary than the simple post-case-bliss. He looked content. He looked like he'd crafted something tremendous. But what was it? Had John put that look on his face? Did Sherlock really want this, him, so badly?

John felt suddenly overwhelmed by the intensity of that thought, and with Sherlock's fathomless eyes set upon him, he found himself unable to share in his apparent relaxation. John blinked and gulped against the swell in the back of his throat. He was no stranger to the absolute power, the passion, Sherlock could put behind something he was focused on.

A distressing thought struck him: was he a bit out of his depth here?

The fear seemed to render every nerve-ending on his body hyper aware of the man pressed up against it. He could barely feel the solid warmth of Sherlock's form behind the layers of pyjamas, but that was enough to swamp his body with sensation. Every breath of Sherlock's against his lips, every little twitch of the slender fingers on his back shuddered through him like a static shock.

To make matters worse, his gaze felt irrevocably locked with Sherlock's. Every fissure and swirl of color in his irises so familiar, and yet so daunting. It struck him, and he felt rather stupid for it, that they were really doing this. He, John, and Sherlock bloody Holmes were lying in bed together about to go at it. It was jarring, to say the very least, to have it become so real after spending so long running over similar scenarios in his head.

And there was Sherlock, impervious to any of the nervousness now beginning to wreak havoc on John's mind and body. God, did he look confident. And why shouldn't he?

When they had kissed, and Sherlock had begun to unleash some of his apparent hidden talent, John had nearly fainted, he was so affected. And that was just an experiment with set parameters. They were kissing, nothing more. Just the threat of it becoming something serious had John chucking Sherlock to the floor. He could still feel the echo of Sherlock's fingertip as it breached the band of his pants. The memory alone sent a jolt of tingling right between his legs.

Now, with their romantic relationship confirmed in no uncertain terms, there was nothing to keep them from going…further. John couldn't help but tremble at the thought. What did he know about sex with a man? Well, sure, he knew the basics from bits of research done out of curiosity. That was a Google search history he was sure to clear before Sherlock commandeered his laptop again. But even from the innocent contact he'd had with Sherlock (and was currently having), everything was so different from what he knew or was comfortable with.
Instead of curves and soft, pillow-like contours, Sherlock was all angles and sinew and narrow hips. And sure, Sherlock might have had the same basic physical schematics as he did, and he certainly knew his way around himself, but that could only take him so far. He felt like he was stranded in uncharted territory, unable to rely on his wisdom or practiced skills.

Sherlock, conversely, seemed to be comfortable with any and all possibilities.

The fluttering beat of his pulse was starting to flood his ears, making him dizzy again and altogether anxious out of his mind.

When Sherlock, oblivious to the roiling crisis he was having, reached up to touch John's cheek with his fingertips, John flinched before he could stop himself. Sherlock immediately pulled his hand away, serenity draining from his face to be replaced with a calculating furrow.

"Problem?"

"No, wait, sorry—I was just—" John stammered, finding himself wishing the strange, calm expression would return to Sherlock's face and replace his deepening scowl.

"You're nervous again."

"I am not," John snapped, blushing. "I just—"

"Yes. You are."

"Am not!" His voice cracked traitorously on the words.


"Well, yes, of course I bloody am! We're about to—I don't—how can you not be? It's not fair."

"Why would I be?"

"You aren't, I don't know, worried about—making sure you—oh, forget it," John groaned, extracting his hands from where they were curled in Sherlock's robe lapels, and covering his face. He sighed against his palms, cursing when he realized how he was shaking now. At least he could blame it on the fever.

He went rigid when warm, long digits wrapped both of his wrists and eased his hands away from his face. When he blinked his eyes back open he found Sherlock, still just centimeters away, staring at him, appraising him.

"You're flustered because you're concerned about your sexual inexperience with men?"

John startled, and then chided himself from not anticipating that Sherlock would cut right to the core of the matter.

"Maybe," John muttered, hoping he sounded at least a little enigmatic, though that was really Sherlock's area.

"Unnecessary."

"What?"

"Your concern is unnecessary." The deep, crackling, damn-near-sultry voice the virus was gracing Sherlock with didn't help John's composure in the slightest.
"It's not like I can help it!" John bit back. "You're so damn...calm about it. It's all so new to me, I don't...Jesus, I feel like a bloody virgin right now." If possible, he flushed an even deeper shade of red when the words fell out of his mouth.

Sherlock looked puzzled.

"You feel like a virgin," he stated, as though saying it out loud would help him understand John's logic better. John rallied his courage, figuring he might as well plow on since there wasn't a chance in hell Sherlock would let go of the comment now.

"Yes, in a way. I mean, I am, aren't I?"

"You most certainly are not."

"With men, I mean, Sherlock. I don't know what I'm doing and every time you touch me it's like-,

John growled, snapping his mouth shut before he said too much. Sherlock stared at him, brow crinkled. "Oh Christ, this is embarrassing-"

John dropped his head forward in an effort to hide his expression. Before he realized what he was doing, he buried his face under Sherlock's chin, eyes shut tight against the warm silk and t-shirt cotton of his chest. Sherlock's arm tightened on his back, and John shifted closer, sliding his own arm around Sherlock's waist. The steady beat of Sherlock's heart near his ear was soothing.

"Sorry," he mumbled into the fabric, absorbing the warmth around him and letting it quell his relentless trembling. Perhaps he was overreacting a bit. Once he had Sherlock there, in his arms, everything seemed much more familiar.

After a moment, during which Sherlock withheld from speaking, John pulled back far enough to look into his face.

"I'm thinking too much."

"Yes, you are. And thank you for doing so at the one instance when I'd prefer you didn't," Sherlock said acerbically, but John didn't fail to catch the glint of playfulness in his eyes.

"You're welcome."

"I already told you I have no expectations," Sherlock said after a beat. "I'd say we don't have to do anything if you don't want to, but I know you want to, so I can only assume you're being obstinate again."

"I do want to."

"Obvious."

John rolled his eyes.

"Is that your favourite word?"

"No. Just the one I'm forced to use the most frequently."

"Right." John cleared his throat and adjusted his grip on Sherlock's back. Then he paused. "Wait, what is your favourite word, then?"

"I don't want to tell you."
John perked up instantly.

"Why not?"

"You're going to mock me."

"Probably, but tell me anyway."

Sherlock appeared to consider for a moment, fixing John with a narrowed glare.

"It's 'bumblebee.'"

John blinked.

"Bumblebee."

"Also 'gangrenous.'"

"Your favourite words are 'bumblebee' and 'gangrenous'?"

"Obvious," Sherlock rasped, a slight quirk tugging on the corner of his mouth.

"Smart arse. Do you want to know what my favourite word is?"

"No."

John scowled.

"Why not?"

"I already know it's 'suture.'"

John's mouth fell open.

"H-how the hell did you know that?"

"You told me."

"Oh. Right."

John's eyes flickered to Sherlock's lips, where the evidence of an impending smirk was unmistakable. Despite the flurry of nerves still rattling around in his chest, John found himself grinning like a fool. Sherlock gave him a look that said 'finally, you catch on' all too clearly. And John had.

He was just John and this was just Sherlock, and yes, Sherlock was right: concern was unnecessary.

"So, how about we go slow with this and just...see where we end up, alright?"

"That's exactly what I was planning on doing."

"As usual, I'm a few steps behind you. You should be used to that by now."

"You keep telling me to stop talking, then you repeatedly force me to speak with you. I don't—"

John, realizing that he did, indeed, want their conversation to end, cut Sherlock off by joining their
lips together. Sherlock hesitated, but not for long, slanting his head against the pillow and pulling John firmly against him.

And God, the taste of him. It rendered the soft camber of Sherlock's bottom lip irresistible, and John took it between his own, gently at first, then nipping a little. Sherlock was extremely responsive. He grazed the tip of his tongue between John's teeth, caressing in a deft sweep. A jolt of pleasure shot right through John's chest at the contact, surging down to his belly before it bloomed in his pelvis.

A primal, sudden, coursing need for more contact consumed him. He had to be touched, to push himself closer to Sherlock, to wring his pleasure from the body in his arms.

Tentatively, he slid his leg between Sherlock's thighs, allowing himself to be drawn even closer, until their hips were fitted together. He gasped into Sherlock's mouth when their cocks made contact through layers of thin fabric. Clinging to him, one hand splayed out between shoulder blades and the other fisted against his chest, John breathed heavily against Sherlock's lips, trying to center himself. He was trembling, even from so little contact, with his forehead pressed against Sherlock's brow. Swelling, swift and glorious, pooled in his groin.

"Alright?" Sherlock whispered, his own breathing hurried. He cupped John's face with his left hand, the other still firmly wrapped around John's back, and ran the pad of his thumb across his cheekbone.

His eyes were smoldering in a shade somewhere between grey and cyan. There was definite concern woven in them, but also brutal, hardly concealed longing.

John was ignited by it.

"Mhmm," John hummed, and caught Sherlock's lips with a deep, open-mouthed kiss, dragging his tongue against Sherlock's without warning. He earned a low, rattling moan from the detective, who rolled his hips forward. The pressure of warmth and fabric against his groin was staggering, drawing a whimper from his throat. His clothes felt far too tight.

Wrapping his tongue around Sherlock's with rising fervor, he let instinct take over and arched his hips back against Sherlock in turn.

"Oh God," he gasped when the unmistakable form of Sherlock's erection met hard and perfect with his own through pyjama trousers. John panted, clawing at Sherlock's back to keep himself from rutting. His other hand slithered between pillow and neck to clasp Sherlock's nape, holding him close to keep those plump lips in reach.

He kissed him, again and again between frenzied breaths, every lungful growing more intoxicating as his mouth saturated with Sherlock's taste. He inhaled him deep into his chest until he was hardly able to tell where his scent ended and Sherlock's began.

"This is—" he kissed him again, "this is—" and again.

"Yes."

It was too much. His head swarmed with dizziness, his throat went raw from holding back the moan that desperately tried to break forth. His skin felt too hot, and yet he wasn't sweating. The thought flickered through his addled mind that it must be a bizarre side-effect of the fever. And he definitely had a fever. It added an extra edge to everything, every move he made. He was delirious with it.
The kiss they'd shared before had been nothing compared to this. He was being consumed,
conquered. They'd barely done anything and yet it was as though Sherlock knew exactly where to
push, exactly how to kiss him to send him reeling. And worse still, John knew he was holding
back, was relinquishing control as much as he was able. Of course, that didn't stop his hips from
churning forward and oh, Jesus, if John didn't free himself from his pants soon he might scream.

Sherlock, seeming to hear his thoughts, began dragging down the hand on John's back. He weaved
it in a slow circle, continuing to kiss John with unflinching technique, until he rested it on the arc of
his hip.

Sherlock pulled back a fraction, catching John's eyes. The sight of Sherlock's pupils, blown wide
and black, surrounded by a sliver of grey-green, sent a frisson down John's spine. Sherlock's gaze
was burrowing into him, deep inside, speaking to him without words. His intention couldn't have
been clearer.

John clamped his mouth shut, exhaling hard out of his nose, and nodded. Though John didn't
imagine it was possible, Sherlock's eyes flickered with an even more potent ferocity.

Sherlock had latched himself onto John, had clasped him with all the focus that magnificent brain
could muster.

John could scarcely breathe.

And then one finger tip, then two, breached the band of his pants. He trembled, his grip on
Sherlock's nape and back so taut his knuckles went white. Sherlock's gaze didn't break with his,
didn't flinch, and John drowned it, panting as those fingers moved lower and lower.

Sherlock's fingertips grazed his belly, slow in their movements, until they made contact with the
first tufts of hair. A twitch shot through him and he blinked away the white spots threatening the
edges of his vision.

"Oh, Jesus Christ," he huffed when Sherlock's fingers made first contact. He thrust forward
involuntarily, pushing himself into Sherlock's own hardness, trapping his fingers between them.

John whimpered, knotting his fingers in soft curls. Sherlock inched his hips back, and John almost
protested until he realized Sherlock only separated them enough so he could wrap his whole hand
around John's length.

A sweet sob broke from John's swollen throat. God, it was good. Way, way too good. And yet, it
was wrong. It wasn't enough. Not nearly.

"Sher-Sherlock, wait," he choked out. Sherlock's hand froze but he did not remove it from John's
boxers. "I want to—I—you, I want to touch you."

"Then touch me," Sherlock whispered, his eyes glinting with challenge. To drive his point, it
seemed, Sherlock gave John a slow squeeze. John stuttered an indecipherable sound, the dull
throbbing in his abdomen growing sharper.

Gathering his courage, he swallowed hard and slid his hand down Sherlock's back. Trying his luck,
and figuring if he was ever going to do it, now was the time, John trailed his palm over the curve
of Sherlock's arse and gave it a quick pinch.

Sherlock's eyebrows arched right up his forehead.

"Always wanted to do that," John whispered, and before Sherlock could quip back, he swiftly drew
his hand between them and cupped Sherlock's cock through fabric.

Eyelids fluttering, Sherlock gasped. John took the opportunity to kiss him, before sweeping his hand up to the band of Sherlock's pants, and slipping it in.

Since John had never touched another man like this before, it took him a moment to acclimatize to the sensation. Sherlock, as with his general figure, was longer and more slender than John. The smooth, velvety skin was similar, hot and pulsing in his palm, but still different. Somehow, it didn't seem as strange as he imagined. This was a part of Sherlock. A part of Sherlock that made him feel good. How could he not-

And John's thought process was derailed when Sherlock gave him a long tug, freeing most of his length from his pants, and forcing all of John's focus back to his eyes.

Sherlock was glaring at him, his expression clearly stating 'you pay attention to me now.' John could do nothing but acquiesce, adjusting his grip, and pulling Sherlock free of his pants as well. With a sigh, he let himself sink back into that black and grey gaze.

"Ready?" John asked stupidly, imagining he would blush if his face could possibly get any more red.

Rather than reply, Sherlock began pumping John with a steady, bewildering rhythm that had him moaning shamelessly against Sherlock's mouth. Trying to compose himself and focus on his own task, which was proving difficult the more Sherlock tugged at him, John began moving his own wrist. He was rewarded with an immediate reaction from Sherlock, who inhaled sharply and crushed his lips against John's in a short kiss.

Dizziness burned in John's head, his focus narrowing to grey eyes and a warm hand. He was fully panting now, claiming kisses whenever he caught his breath. He couldn't help but roll his hips into Sherlock's hand, doing his best to keep his grip consistent and steady despite the tingling fog threatening to overcome him.

Sherlock's face was similar to his own, though a bit more guarded and less overwhelmed. Still, Sherlock couldn't hide the way his pupils were contracting even wider, the way his cheeks pinked, the way his breath kept hitching in his throat.

"What do you need?" John choked, hurtling towards the edge under Sherlock's perfect stroke. He wanted him to feel just as good, but knew his pace was faltering. His whole body was rattled with tremors now, leg muscles clenching and unclenching between Sherlock's thighs. Christ, he was lightheaded. It was so dangerously close to too much, the only thing keeping him anchored being the unflinching lock of Sherlock's eyes on his own.


"Yes. Come on," John groaned. He knew he was being taken. Claimed with sensation; fever, and anticipation, and nerves all coalescing in a pleasure that vibrated through his whole body, his whole being.

"John—"

"Yes. Please, yes."

"I'm gonna—"
"Me too, come on."

And then John was keening, arching into Sherlock with a broken sob, yet not breaking their eye contact. A white, shattering pleasure surged through his body, and a drenching sweat broke out from every pore of his skin. He spilled himself warm on Sherlock's hand and onto his shirt and stomach, feeling Sherlock's own release following seconds after. He watched as the grey spheres contracted, bliss contorting Sherlock's expression, before he was smothered in a frantic kiss.

Their tongues collided in a flurry. John was soaked with sweat, as was Sherlock if the back of his neck was anything to go by. They were wet, hot, and wholly sated.

Soon, their kissing slowed to a languid pace, a deep relaxation smoothing over them. In unison, they inhaled and exhaled, the room now permeated with the scent of Sherlock, and John, and release. With one last tender pull, John tucked Sherlock back into his pants as Sherlock did the same.

Without requesting assistance, Sherlock removed his blue robe and began using it to clean them up. John would have been shocked to see him use his beloved robe for such an act if he wasn't incapable of being riled up by anything. The careful precision of the silk wiping away the evidence of their pleasure added a whole new level to his bliss.

Once finished, Sherlock tossed the soiled blue silk aside and settled back down beneath the covers. He took John in his arms, oblivious to the practically drenched state they were both in. John buried his face against Sherlock's chest, sighing and letting his heavy lids close.

Yet, just as John felt himself drifting into sleep, a sudden realization jolted him back into waking.

He looked over, who was clearly perplexed at his sudden conviction, and flattened his palm against the detective's damp forehead.

"Sherlock…"

"What is it?" Sherlock asked in weak, crackling tone.

"I…I think…"

"What?"

"I think we broke our fevers."

Chapter End Notes

And there you have it, my darlings: the end of 'The Temper Between'. I can't tell you how much fun I had working on this project. I'm a huuuuuge fan of sickfics, always have been, so I figured it was time to write my own. Having your support has been as wonderful to me as, say, meeting my soulmate in a morgue and promptly moving in with him after I shot someone on his behalf. Like, seriously, that good.

Oh, and I'm writing a short(ish) Potterlock fic called The Pensieve of Sherlock Holmes. Basically it's a loose retelling of 'The Prince's Tale' featuring Sherlock and John.
As always, I tend to post about my progress on my tumblr, so if you're interested come introduce yourself.

You readers have healed me as a writer in a way that I will treasure forever. 'Thank you' is quite simply not enough.

See you soon!

UPDATE: 'The First Trip' is up! Proceed with love :)

Works inspired by this one: Cover for The Temper Between by moonblossom graphics (moonblossom), Cover for The Temper Between by Fabulae

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!