The Universe is Rarely So Lazy

by DarkWaters

Summary

Mycroft Holmes has decided it was time to have an heir to the Holmes family. But due to his position and declining fertility, time is of the essence. A surrogate is the intelligent choice but an error at the clinic results in the neighboring patient being inseminated instead of Mycroft's choice. The patient is Joanne Watson.

Notes

Hi! I'm a bit of a slow updater so please be patient! This is extremely loosely based on the accident as seen in "Jane the virgin". I hope you like it! Please comment! I live for them!
Chapter One

Mycroft Holmes threw back his Brandy, barely tasting the drink and eyes the clock on his mantle. It had been years coming. His doctors had assured him that this was his last option to have a child that was genetically his, someone to carry on the Holmes legacy, his progeny. Planning and discretion had been key in his plans to provide a grandchild for his parents. His attempts at dating had usually ending in disappointment due to the stresses from his position consistently disallowing him the time to build a suitable relationship and then hearing from his doctor that his fertility was near non-existent and declining further! He was out of time and options.

Anthea had been invaluable in acquiring a discreet woman who was willing to accommodate his needs. Giselle. She was an ethereal, blonde beauty who was an accomplished artist from Paris. She agreed to his proposal and financial support. She would provide him with a child and handle the bulk of the responsibilities parenting-wise. Contact would be a minimum except for required functions and certain holidays.

It was...acceptable.

Giselle should be pregnant by this time tomorrow. Anthea was accompanying her to the clinic and had ensured the woman was fully prepared. Everything would be fine. Just fine.

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Susan Teserero stumbled over her feet. Her first day as a temporary doctor at such an esteemed women's health clinic and she had been up all night panicking, resulting in her oversleeping and barely able to fully comprehend the fact that her mentor was off sick. She was just an intern but she could do it.

"Okay, doctor, you have an annual in exam 8 and an artificial in 9."

The nurse held out the trays, both covered and handed them over.

"Yeah, sure, got it." Susan replied shakily, her nerves getting the best of her as she could barely hear what the nurse was saying.

The redhead eyed her shrewdly, possibly worried at her confidence.

"Are you sure you can do this by yourself? I can assist, Dr. Teserero."

The doctor's cheeks heated in embarrassment at the subtle accusation. "I can handle it. Exam room 8 and 9. Thank you, nurse." She added pointedly and spun to enter the exam room behind her, not looking at the number to attempt confidence even though her nerves were jangling.

She entered and carried the tray over to the table, her eyes focused on the floor.

"So, you're here for the artificial insemination, miss...er..." She swallowed as she looked up, seeing that her patient was fully asleep laying on the table, her lower half covered by a thin sheet for modesty. The poor woman looked exhausted. Her long blond hair was in a loose ponytail, dark circles were purple under her eyes and Susan could see a hint of bruising on her cheek. She wondered just what it was this woman did.
A glance to her left showed a lab coat with an ID tag for a clinic but in the pocket, peeking out, she could see a DI badge. Was it possible this woman was both a doctor and an officer? That would explain doing artificial insemination. She probable had little time for a relationship. Many women getting older had chosen this way to have children to remove the difficulties of romantic entanglements.

Joanne Watson jerked awake at the gentle touch to her shoulder, cursing instantly when her bruised cheek made it's presence known at her grimace.

She blamed Sherlock. He'd damn well known she had an appointment first thing in the morning and then a shift down in the A & E department at St. Bart's. There was no way he had needed to monopolize her entire night on a stake-out, then storm in after the suspected counterfeiter with Lestrade's pilfered badge. Jo had been stuck having to fight dirty when things turned violent.

The epic sulk from Sherlock following the arrest by a very irritated Dimmock had been unbelievable. Jo had flat out refused to attend the debriefing the next day citing work. "Priorities, Joanne!" He had snapped. Dimmock had made it very clear that Sherlock had to attend and the full amount of paperwork completed. As a result, her infuriating flatmate had ensured that she did not get any sleep as retribution for her 'abandonment'.

"Are you alright?"

Jo looked up, blinking sleep from her eyes and nodded. There was a young brunette doctor, no, an intern. Her coat was too short.

"I'm fine. Where's Dr. Simon?" She looked behind the small woman whose shoulders straightened at the question.

"She's off ill today. Don't worry though. I've done this before." The smile seemed kind and Jo relaxed a bit, allowing the doctor to help her fit her feet into the stirrups.

"Just budge up a bit. Thank you."

Jo hated these but since she'd passed thirty, her concerns about her health had increased. She stared at the bland ceiling, tensing at the touch of the speculum.

"Sorry, just relax, ma'am." A soothing touch to her knee and Jo snorted. Being called ma'am. Now she felt old.

"So, you're doing this alone? No husband?" The intern attempted to converse and Jo cringed at the feel of something scraping against her cervix. This exam was taking far longer than what she was used to but Jo relented in snapping at the intern. It was probably her first unsupervised one.

"Uh. Yeah." She shuddered at the feel of something and forced herself to stay still.

"You're very brave." Frowning, Jo started to reply when the speculum was suddenly pulled out and laid on the tray.

"Alright. All done." The brunette pulled off her gloves and helped Jo lower her legs. She went to sit up but the woman put a hand on her shoulder. Give it ten minutes then you may leave. You should have the results in two weeks."

The doctor left a very confused Joanne Watson.
Dr. Teserero left the exam room, carrying the remaining tray. Now for the annual exam. She walked next door and stepped in.

"Hello, my name is Dr. Teserero. I'm afraid that Dr. Simon is off ill today so I'll be handling your care today, Miss..."

She looked up and saw two women. One on the exam table, a very attractive blond, and a dark-haired brunette on a blackberry who looked up in surprise at the interruption.

"It's Miss Giselle Campeau for her artificial insemination." The brunette spoke curtly and Susan felt a flush of horror pass through her.

Oh, God! She had inseminated the wrong woman! Her hands fumbled, fingers numb as she set the tray down.

"Are you alright, doctor? Are you able to handle this?" The blackberry wielding woman asked. She wanted to answer a vehement No! but she refrained and nodded weakly.

She could salvage this. Her career. It was only a 25% percent chance that the other woman had gotten pregnant. Unlikely. And this was a first step in with infertile couples so if this one didn't take with Giselle (which it wouldn't as there wasn't any sperm since it had gone on the wrong patient) then usually, couples tried again. No loss. Everything was...fine.

"I'll just step outside, then."

The woman left, leaving the blond and the doctor. Oh, shit.

Jo stumbled through getting dressed, half asleep and rushed out of the exam room, bypassing the usual post-nurse nurse instructions. She didn't have time. She needed to drop back off Lestrade's stolen badge and get to work. She wasn't looking where she was going when she collided with a solid body, knocking her back a step.

"Oh...so-" Jo swallowed her apology, quickly turning into a curious but suspicious gaze as she saw who it was she bumped into.

"Doctor Watson."

"Anthea." She replied short. "Please say you're here for a check-up."

Anthea looked at her pointedly and Jo took the hint to leave off. "Right. Whatever. As long as it has nothing to do with me, I don't care."

She smiled. "For once, doctor, this visit has nothing to do with you."
Chapter Two

Mycroft stared at the test results from his surrogate, a sense of despair squeezing his chest. Negative. He had hoped for positive but knew that it was a slim chance.

Pinching the bridge of his nose, he hit the intercom signaling for his PA. Anthea strode in, impeccable as ever. "I'll need a new contract for Giselle. I understand that she was adverse to in vitro fertilization due to the risks involved but can you broach the subject?"

Her brown eyes softened in sympathy and Mycroft clenched his jaw. "Of course, sir. Will that be all?"

"I'll need the files from Syria as well."

Anthea turned to leave but Mycroft stopped her, clearing his throat. "Just...don't pressure her. It'll be at least three months before a second attempt can be made."

She jerked her head in acknowledgement and left. Leaning back in his seat, the elder Holmes felt like a failure. Such a simple task but so difficult for him. It was times like this that he envied the general population. Some things came so simply for them but he had always had to fight for everything in life.

Apparently, the simple act of procreation was one more thing that he would have to work at. He envied his younger brother. So driven and fortunate. He had a career that he enjoyed and had even acquired friends and close acquaintances. Mycroft's position alienated most and only provided false politeness through a sense of fear from others. There were employees but, again, not people he could truly call friends.

Joanne Watson, though a recent addition, has taken to Sherlock's unusual lifestyle like a fish to water, going so far as to even have a cordial relationship with him. Her attempts to make peace between the brothers, while amusing, was well meaning and genuine. It was very much like their mother. It was surprising. The woman seemed to have no sense of self-preservation and even less fear when it pertained to him.

Mycroft straightened his waistcoat and checked the time. Perhaps a visit to his brother to alleviate his melancholy mood was in order.

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Joanne stumbled after Sherlock, her vision tunneling and graying at the edges. They had been out for over twenty-four hours and were finalizing paperwork for NSY. She idly wondered when she'd eaten last. Sherlock's odd hours and latest backlog of cases had been causing her to feel off. The stress from being constantly on alert had even been affecting her monthly cycles forcing her to feel bloated and only spotting. Even food had been off putting lately.

A sheen of cold sweat suddenly covered her forehead and she swayed on her feet. Jo forced herself to grit her teeth and stabilize.

"Alright, I think we've got everything now." Lestrade shuffled the papers in his hands and pushed them aside, eyeing the duo with a serious expression. "But next time, wait for backup. We are here for a reason."
Sherlock flicked a hand as if swatting an annoying fly. "Perhaps if we weren't forced to deal with the substandard staff in your department then Jo and I wouldn't have to take matters into our own hands."

Lestrade scowled at Sherlock's statement, causing the detective to look up.

"Not good?" He asked.

"No, Sherlock." Jo answered, looking pained.

Rolling his eyes, Sherlock swept out of the office. "You know what I mean, Geoffrey."

Greg pressed his lips into a thin line of irritation at the backwards apology and Jo let out a deep breath, wiping her forehead with a shaky hand. "Sorry."

Lestrade laughed ruefully. "It's alright. Just..." He looked up and his brown eyes narrowed as he looked at her properly. "You look like you could do with a kip and a bacon sarnie. You alright?"

The thought of a bacon sandwich caused the gorge to rise and Jo swallowed reflexively. "Fine. Just fine."

Greg frowned, starting to stand and Jo waved his concern away. "Just a bit of a flu bug. I'll be fine but keep the good cases away for a week or so to give me a chance to get over this otherwise Sherlock will end up dead because of Anderson."

"If you're sure..."

Jo gave him a pointed look that brooked no argument and left to follow her crazy friend. She was surprised to find him waiting at the entrance to the station, staring down the Detective Sergeant at the front desk. Jo decided a quick exit would be smart and sped up her walk.

"Finally! Molly has two bladders she's been saving for me. I want to test..."

Jo wavered at the door and Sherlock gripped her elbow, his laser-like focus suddenly on her. "Something's wrong."

She just wanted to get home, have some soup and go to sleep. "Good deduction, that."

She tried to shake off his grip but he held on tight.

"You're sick?"

"Probably."

Sherlock huffed in annoyance but Jo could read through his bravado. The way he held onto her and slowed his paced showed that he cared.

They got to the curb, Jo, at this point, was seeing little black dots and wanted to throw up, but the sudden stop of Sherlock stole her attention.

"Mycroft." He hissed.

Bloody hell. This was all she needed.

"Brother mine, I see you're running your doctor rather ragged. Perhaps a ride home would be
appreciated?" Mycroft was leaning against the side of the black car and twirling his ever present umbrella, looking them over but his gaze stopped upon seeing Jo.

"Or perhaps to the hospital?" His eyes narrowed on Jo, who was at this point sweating profusely and fighting the urge to not lose it on Sherlock's coat.

"I am quite capable of finding my way home, dear brother." He spat as if an insult.

She had to have eaten something that had been off but she couldn't remember what. The last thing had been...damn. Her concentration was shite.

She could hear the brothers arguing but it seemed far away, as if she was falling. Her legs felt like jelly, knees shaking as she stumbled back. Two pairs of hands grabbed at her and lowered her to the ground. She had a glance of two sets of stormy blue-grey eyes before her world went black.
Chapter Three

Sherlock took in the sight of his friend lying on the gurney. Joanne was angry. That much was clear by the glares she shot his way and at the staff tending to her. She was still pale and her hands shook, most likely culprit being low blood sugar and dehydration which had been confirmed by the nurse's quick glucose check and the fact that Joanne had started to become more vocal in her protestations after receiving IV fluids.

The root cause, however, was unknown.

He had known Joanne for long enough to know that simply skipping a meal or two would not normally have this devastating effect. She was a doctor and had been a soldier. Irregular eating should be second nature to her. Scowling, Sherlock shifted in his seat, his foot brushing against his pompous brother's umbrella.

The doctor assigned to Watson's care walked in and Sherlock immediately disliked him. Clearly a resident by the length of his coat, trying to be a welcoming presence to his patience by his casual t-shirt underneath which showed, to Sherlock and by Mycroft's hand twitch, Mycroft belying his displeasure, inexperience and lack of confidence.

"Ah, Joanne Watson. I heard you weren't feeling well."

Sherlock rolled his eyes at the condescending tone. "Obviously."

Joanne glared at him and his jaw snapped shut with an audible click.

"Yeah. It's just a stomach bug or something. It hit me harder because I was out working. I'm fine." She added to Sherlock.

"Well, we'll see." He moved closer and patted her hand condescendingly, moving onto the questions. They had been unceremoniously kicked out after the doctor had began asking questions about her health. Once it had gotten to the point of asking about her bowel habits and if she happened to be pregnant, obviously not, she had forced them to leave citing personal space. The former, if it had been an issue, would have been noted if it had been a problem as she would have been unable to keep up with him. The latter was obvious. The last person, Roger-Richard-whatever his name was, had been six months ago and hadn't even progressed beyond dating. Why did he ask such redundant questions when they had already been answered by Joanne when the nurse had asked the same exact questions ten minutes prior?

It was frustrating. Joanne's insistence that it was a stomach bug weren't fitting with the data that he had seen. For one, there was no fever, a classic symptom. Then her attempt at suggesting that it was food poisoning had been ludicrous. When they had eaten it had always been the same things so if she was sick because of it then it would follow that he would be ill as well. The doctor's inane questions only served to show his lack of intelligence and experience.

He needed more data! He was a student of human behaviors and death of the body but not of the living body itself. Horrible images of cancers, unknown diseases and ailments were at the forefront of his mind. Sherlock's legs jiggled, unspent energy at his utter uselessness in this situation clawing at him.
Mycroft laid a hand on his leg, stilling his movement and Sherlock's head snapped up. "Let's take a walk."

Sherlock's eyes strayed towards the doors against his will.

"Come along, brother. There's nothing to be done until the doctor has finished with her."

Sherlock scowled and followed him outside to the ambulance bay, knowing Mycroft was right. The offered cigarette just went to show that he was frustrated and concerned as much as him.

Sherlock looked him over, noting the lines surrounding his eyes, slight weight loss and the distracted air about him. Pulling a long drag from the cigarette, Sherlock broached the silence.

"Why were you there today?"

Mycroft hesitated, very telling. "Can't I simply visit and check up on my dear brother and his companion?" He eyed Sherlock. "Clearly it was needed."

Snorting, he rolled his eyes at the blatant lie. "You expect me to believe that?"

Mycroft's lips pressed into a thin line. "Is that so hard to believe?"

Sherlock exhaled a small cloud. "You're getting sentimental in your old age."

"Thirty-eight is hardly old." He dropped the butt and ground it under his heel. "Not up to your usual standards in insults," He smirked at him. "Although, slightly more factual than your juvenile jibes about my weight."

Shrugging, Sherlock lit another smoke from the end of his first. The weight of Mycroft's hand as it fell on his shoulder in support did help. He felt...grounded.

"She will be fine."

The reassurance was appreciated. It was familiar. Like when they were kids. Mycroft had been such a gangly teenager, always cautious, preferring to watch from the sidelines and wait before reacting but he was always right. There were times when it had been irritating but right now, he hoped Mycroft was right.

"And if she isn't?" He asked quietly.

"Then I will ensure it."

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Joanne spied her jeans and quickly pulled them on, ignoring the recommendations of the large nurse that had been assigned to her. She was bloody well done with this farce. She just wanted to get home and sit out whatever it was she had been stuck with. After a dose of antiemetics and some fluids, she felt fine. Not a hundred percent but enough to get home.

She was pulling on her jumper when there was a knock and the doctor walked in, holding her chart. He was a first year resident, clearly still nervous in treating patients but he could be good if he'd stop trying so hard.

"Dr. Watson, I think I've got the reason why you were so sick." He smiled and Joanne tugged her
"It was a simple case of dehydration and low blood sugar because I was too busy chasing my mad flatmate all over London to eat and drink." She shrugged and looked around to ensure nothing had been forgotten from her impromptu check-up.

"That is a part of it but it's a little more complicated."

Jo's eyes narrowed in suspicion as she sat down and waited for the doctor to explain.

"Most of your labs were fine. No signs of infections or illness. Urinalysis showed no sign of infection, blood or proteins but it did give a positive pregnancy test." He looked excited. In the A&E, it was rare to deliver, what was seen by most, as positive news.

Jo shook her head, feeling her heart speed up. "That's not possible."

He looked amused at her expression. "I'm sure your husband would beg to differ."

Jo snapped straight. "We are not a couple!" Her opinion of him started to sink.

The doctor started to look uncomfortable. "The test came back definitely positive."

"You had to have mixed up my sample with someone else's. I haven't..." Her cheeks heated. Why was talking about sex so embarrassing? She was an adult and a medical doctor! "Look, it's been at least six months."

Disbelief colored the man's features and Joanne's jaw clenched. "It's been a slow summer." She grit out.

He raised his hands in surrender but clearly still didn't believe her. It just wasn't possible. Her last boyfriend, Ryan, had only gotten two dates in before being overwhelmed with her lifestyle and had promptly ran. There had been no one else!

"I saw the test run myself, Dr. Watson. There's no question." He patted her hand sympathetically. She had began trembling, the reality of what Dr. Johnson was telling her slowly making it's way through the confused fog of her mind.

"You're wrong." She breathed. Her nausea was starting to make a comeback. Jo's eyes fell on the umbrella on the plastic chair in the corner. What on earth would Sherlock think? Jo snorted. He'd probably turn her into a living breathing experiment and the mystery of the immaculate conception would keep him busy at way too personal of a level. While she loved watching Sherlock working on a puzzle, it was a different beast when it was all focused on her. She did not need that.

And then there was Mycroft. Nosy but well meaning. Mostly. There was no such thing as personal space and privacy with someone who pretty much ran Britain and the Secret Services.

Different scenarios ran through her mind at the false positive. Cancer was at the top of her list. An expired test strip, contamination of the sample, evaporation lines, ovarian cysts...the list continued ending in the rare possibility of a trophoblastic tumor located in her reproductive tract. False positives were rare but possible. She needed to see her doctor.

"Dr. Johnson, I'd appreciate it if this test result didn't find it's way into my chart as a professional courtesy. I don't believe it's right and I'd like to see my own personal doctor. Also, if the two posh gits outside the door ask or threaten you about my private results, don't tell them about the possible pregnancy. They tend to become overbearing and I want to confirm these...results." She still didn't
believe them.

The doctor frowned at her. "But in your condition it would be best -"

"What condition?" The door slammed open admitting both of the two men she had just warned the doctor about, Sherlock at the lead. She gave Johnson a look that plainly said 'See! This is what I meant.' The faint smell of cigarettes caused her to press her lips together in disgust. Normally, it wouldn't bother her so much but today, it was too much after such a long day.

The doctor nodded but Sherlock's and Mycroft's eyes were on her, looking her up and down, calculating, analyzing and thinking.

"The condition of dealing with your lack of common courtesy." Jo snapped. "Most people knock before entering an exam room."

"Well, it's safe to say that I am not most people." Mycroft smiled dangerously at the doctor and he stepped back at the intimidating presence. "What have you discovered as to the cause of Dr. Watson's fainting spell?"

"I did not faint! I fell and two paranoid blokes thought it was a life or death emergency." Jo grabbed the umbrella in the guest chair and thrust it into Mycroft's hands.

His eyes softened as he turned to her. "We were simply concerned for your health."

"Well, I'm afraid I can't discuss a patient's personal information unless you're a family member or a spouse."

Jo slapped a hand over her face in mortification. He could have said anything but that. There's no way they were going to let it go now.
Chapter 4

Chapter Notes

This was supposed to be longer but I figured it might be a little too much perspective swapping. I really hope it's ok and please review! I love them so go on! Press that review button and let me know what ya think!

"You deserved it." Jo hissed sympathetically as she gently probed Sherlock's cheek for fractures. Satisfied that it was just bruised along with his ego, Jo collected the ice pack that had been prepared. She pressed it to the right side of Sherlock's face, undeterred as he tried to move away.

She had woken in the middle of the night to a scratching and poking in the crook of her elbow, a dark shadow on her left and Joanne had defended herself.

"You're lucky it was just my fist. Serves you right. Coming into my room like a bloody great vampire, trying to take my blood." She collected the first aid kit and quickly put it away before taking a seat opposite her flatmate. Flexing her bruised fingers and knuckles, Jo placed them into the bowl of ice water and sighed in relief.

"Just what were you thinking?" She fixed Sherlock with a piercing gaze.

Sherlock huffed indignantly. "I told you it was for an experiment. I wanted to see the differences between male and female blood when-"

"Oh, pull the other one. You and I both know you could have gotten what you needed from Molly any time." Jo snorted and laughed at the pout half-hidden under the ice pack. He really did look pathetic.

"You know you have a tell that lets me know when you're lying." She pointed in a circular motion.

"I do not!" Sherlock protested.

"Your ears go red." She said smugly.

"They do not." Sherlock's hand slipped on the ice and he glared at the smirking blonde.

"Yes, they do."

"Don't!" As if on cue, the tips turned a vibrant red. She wished she had a camera or a mirror to prove her point.

"Of course, they don't." She replied in a sotto voice that only made Sherlock glare, then grimace as it irritates the bruised flesh.

Jo's face softened and she reached a hand across the table to lay on his, squeezing it to show she understood. "I know you're worried in your own way but I told you, I'm fine." She reached up and fixed the ice pack back into position. "Just give me some privacy to figure this out."

"Alright, Joanne." Sherlock's ears flushed and she rolled her eyes, taking her hand out of the ice
water and drying it carefully.

Jo stood and went to the kettle, pulling down mugs and tea bags for a morning cuppa. After filling it and putting it on the hob to boil, she went to the refrigerator. Jo had to fight the nausea at the sight of it's contents. Swallowing forcefully, she shut the door and closed her eyes in frustration. "You owe me a new carton of milk. I don't think it's supposed to be purple."

She spun on her heel and went upstairs, tea forgotten, and got ready for the day.

She was pulling on her jacket, ready to leave, when a firm knock sounded at their door. Jo opened it and was surprised to see a middle-aged man holding a black doctor's bag at their door. He looked nervous. Mycroft. Nosy git probably saw her punch Sherlock from some hidden camera. She made a mental note to go through her room again.

"He's through there." She thrust a thumb behind her.

Understanding dawned and Jo slapped a hand across her face, running it down. "Oh, for the love of-" Growling, Jo shoved past the stunned man and left for the tube station. There was a prickling sensation on the back of her neck that warned her she was being watched but she just kept her head down and swiped her Oyster card, moving through the crowd and onto the train.

She shot off a text to her friend and doctor who replied quickly saying that she could see her.

It wasn't long before Jo found herself in a paper gown in front of her friend, Dr Ednea Simon with a visibly upset intern behind her. Fortunately, the clinic had only just opened so she was the only patient at the moment and was able to explain the whole thing.

"And that's why I'm here. I never bothered to ask for the results of my exam because I assumed no news is good news."

Simon frowned, her large glasses making her look more like a puffed up, angry owl than anything. "Well, my exam is concurrent with the doctor at Saint Elizabeth's but I don't understand how it's possible. The size of what I felt would indicate that you're about six weeks, give or take a week. I'd need to do an ultrasound to be sure but I know you're very careful about this sort of thing."

Jo curled in on herself. "I also ran some tests to be sure that nothing was missed. Checking for STI's and the sort." Her expression softened and she put a hand on her shoulder. "It looks like it happened about a month ago. Was there a chance that-"

"No. I remember everything. I'm sure of it." She shook her head and glared at the ground.

"Perhaps we should contact the police to be sure. We could perform a termination and get DNA from the embryo to determine-" Jo shook her head at Dr. Simon. She needed a minute.

"Um. Excuse me. Dr. Simon?" Teserero moved forward, positively shaking. "I need to have a word?"

She sighed, irritated at the interruption to her caring for her patient. "Can it wait?"

The intern's eyes flicked between patient and mentor. "No, Doctor. It's important."

Simon sighed and turned back to Watson, giving an apologetic smile. "I'll be right back."
Jo watched as the two left and clambered down, quickly pulling on her clothes. She felt utterly violated. How had this even happened? Harry would piss herself laughing and go spare at the same time. And Sherlock? What would she say to him? The implications of how this occurred made her blood run cold and want to hide away in shame. She worked with NSY. She didn't want them to know she had possibly been raped! It had been so hard to win the respect of her peers and if this got out they would look at her differently.

She was pulling on her boot when she heard a shout outside her door. The sound was too muffled to make out what was going on but Dr. Simon was clearly very angry. In all her years of knowing the woman, Joanne had never seen her lose her cool. She was about to try and listen at the door when it opened abruptly, a red-faced Ednea storming through alone.

"Everything alright?" Jo hedged.

Simon took a calming breath. "I now know what happened and I cannot apologize enough."

"What are you talking about Ednea?" Jo asked, suspicious.

Simon indicated the chairs on the side and they both sat down. "It appears that Dr. Teserero made a serious mistake. When you came in for your check-up and I was off sick, she mixed up your procedure with another patient's."

"Ye-es..." She prompted, wanting the whole story.

"Your room was next to another woman's who was in for artificial insemination. As a result, you received the sample and the other patient did not. Dr. Teserero realized the mistake after but neglected to inform anyone of her mistake."

Joanne noticed how the words were carefully selected. How things were no longer Ednea and Susan as colleagues but by titles. The words changed to sound less threatening but she knew what she meant.

"So...you're telling me that I am pregnant by some stranger's sperm which was supposed to go into some other woman." Jo's hands curled into fists and she could feel her face getting hot. "And nobody knew or figured it out because she was too scared to admit she buggered up!"

"I am so sorry, Jo-Jo."

Jo had to force her hands to unclench. She glared at the floor while Ednea rubbed soothing circles on her back in an effort to calm her.

"What about the other woman? Does she know? She must have been devastated when she got a negative response." Watson had seen patients that had been trying for a baby and each failure had broken them a little more. She felt a confusing mix of guilt and anger. Guilt that she had what was supposed to have been another woman's child inside her and anger at Susan Teserero for doing this to her. Not just her but another woman!

Ednea sighed. "The other patient was a type of surrogate so she wasn't too upset at failing to become pregnant. The hopeful father was only contactable through his assistant. He preferred his privacy and distance but he's being contacted now as to the latest development. Dr. Teserero will be meeting with him as soon as he can come down."

Ednea stood up and went to the locking cabinet, pulling down two bottles. Jo recognized them easily. She watched as Ednea went to the computer and printed out the labels with instructions, knowing what was coming next.
"I cannot ever apologize enough. Since you're still early enough, you can choose to terminate without complications. This bottle has the mifepristone pill that you can take now." She indicated the one on the left then jiggled the one on the right. "This one has misoprostol that is taken twenty-four to seventy-two hours after the first dose. They're about 95% effective."

Joanne took the bottles while the rest of Dr. Simon's words washed over her in a haze. Instructions on aftercare, what to expect, follow-up appointments, and everything else just became a dull buzz. She had prescribed these before and had never thought twice about it but seeing those bottles in her hands, knowing they were for her, it made it different.

"Jo? Are you alright?" Ednea's gentle touch startled her and she jumped.

"Yeah. Yeah, I'm fine." She said numb.

"Do you need some time?"

"Yeah."

Ednea nodded and moved to the door. "Take as long as you need. I'll be in my office if you need anything."

--teeny page break--

A young homeless woman skittered away from the door as she heard the handle rattle. She had heard everything. She rounded the corner as the older doctor stepped out of Dr. Watson's room. Shezza was lucky that this particular clinic offered healthcare for NHS patients and was willing to overlook those less savory on certain days and times.

Most of the time they only saw those on private health cards but today was different. She had been able to follow Watson and found out enough to let Shezza know what was wrong with his doctor and who was responsible. She'd even been able to hear the name of the other patients involved when the older lady and the younger one had been fighting in the hall. Shezza was gonna pay her good for this. She quickly shot off her texts and left unseen.
Chapter 5

Mycroft Holmes didn't suffer fools gladly, nor did he have a lot of spare time to deal with them. A Dr. Teserero from the London Women's Clinic had called his office and asked for him to come in immediately. Anthea had attempted to dissuade the doctor from her insistence on meeting and just gain the information via phone but the moment the word mistake was uttered, Anthea halted the conversation and upped it's importance.

And so Mycroft found himself in the clinic, waiting amongst a veritable hoard of expectant mothers with a receptionist that looked panicked at their schedule being behind. Anthea had provided him with files on Susan Teserero and he was impressed by her scholarly attributes but not so much with her lifestyle. It showed a proclivity towards dishonesty with the multiple affairs she had engaged in during her younger years but it seemed she was attempting to start fresh now that she had fully graduated school.

Her computer had been simple to remotely access and her emails were especially intriguing. It had given him an heads up, so to speak, as to the type of person he was going to be dealing with.

"Mr. Holmes?"

Mycroft swiftly closed his documents and saved them in his phone, standing to greet Dr. Simon. The woman was a veritable expert in her field and had been in practice for thirty years. Joanne Watson had recommended her to multiple patients, even going so far as to being her patient and Mycroft trusted her judgement. He was suspicious as to why a certain intern was involved though.

"Dr. Simon." He shook the woman's hand and allowed her to guide him through the doors towards her office. They were about halfway there when Mycroft spotted a familiar figure, Joanne Watson. She was leaving an exam room, head down and placing two prescription bottles in her jacket pocket. He could see by the wrinkles in her clothing that she had removed them at one point, bunching them into a pile. Most likely by being examined. Her eyes were slightly puffy from crying and her shoulders were hunched and tense.

It was easy to deduce that she had an answer about her recent illness but that it was a serious diagnosis. Mycroft pressed his lips together into a thin line. This did not bode well. At least he was in the correct area to gain the information needed.

Joanne rushed by, eyes on the floor and focused, not even noticing the people she passed on her way out. Mycroft pushed his current concerns for Miss Watson aside, focusing on the moment. One task at a time.

Dr. Simon led him into a small but tastefully decorated office which was already occupied by a very nervous young brunette. She was pale and shaking slightly and Mycroft had to school his features into a neutral expression. It was quite an unusual situation to not be able to know exactly what was happening. He could practically smell the intern's fear.

Ednea Simon moved to sit behind her desk while the young Teserero moved to stand behind her, as if she was a shield to protect her from Mycroft's ire. If the cause was sufficient then nobody could protect Miss Teserero from him.

"Doctor Simon, I do have a rather busy schedule and I wonder-" He paused for effect, eyeing the
intern and noticed the young woman started to fidget. "-why is it that am I here?" His hands rested on crossed legs and he narrowed his eyes at the two women when they took too long to respond.

"Mr. Holmes, firstly, I would like to offer our sincerest apologies from myself and everyone at our establishment." Ednea started.

"And what exactly are you apologizing for?" He preferred specifics.

Dr. Simon looked back at her intern who shook her head, terrified. Simon sighed and turned back to Holmes, expression grim. "It appears that Dr. Teserero, on the day that Miss Campeau came in for her insemination of your sample, made a rather severe mistake. I was not in clinic because I was ill and, as a result, Dr. Teserero was unsupervised and she mixed up two patient's procedures. One was Miss Campeau's and the other was the patient next door."

Mycroft closed his eyes and pinched the bridge of his nose. "Continue."

"The other patient mistakenly received the sample."

Mycroft glared, his anger building like a freight train as the picture unfolded. This was why Giselle failed to become pregnant. Because of a silly girl playing doctor. "And how is it that I am just finding out about this mistake?" He growled.

Simon looked distinctly uncomfortable, her hands trembled and she quickly placed them out of sight to appear more stable but the slight wobble in her voice betrayed her. "I am just finding out about this as well, Mr. Holmes. It came to light when the patient that received the sample came in today."

"Pregnant."

A moment of elation at the thought of a positive test but reality caused it to crash down and burn. He did not even know the identity of the woman, let alone her situation. It shouldn't take long to find out but the effort of convincing another woman could be troublesome and potentially ineffective not to mention the risks involved with having her life intertwined with his. This was why Giselle had been carefully selected and vetted and not some random stranger chosen.

"And just who is pregnant with my child?" The easiest way to get answers sometimes was by simply asking. "After all, I believe I have a right to know as it was your clinic's mistake."

Simon looked apologetic. "That information is confidential and I am afraid that she will most likely be terminating the unwanted pregnancy. I am so sorry."

Unwanted? It may have been unwanted by her but did she realize just how much he wanted it? There was a saying, you don't realize how badly you wanted something until it is taken away and now? Now that he knew there was a child out there that was a part of him, it was like he had been pulled in two at the possibility of it being destroyed before he even had a chance. Was it that she was married? Too young? His phone started to vibrate in his pocket with a text and Mycroft clenched his hand into a fist at the interruption but business came first.

He pulled out the device and saw a message from his brother telling him to meet...or rather demanding it. Mycroft despised texting. He stuffed the phone back in his pocket and stood, furious at the incompetent staff. "Apologies are mere words that will not rectify the grave mistake committed by the intern for which you are responsible for. It is actions from you that I would prefer. Does the woman know who the father is?"

"No, sir. Your confidentiality is protected as much as hers."

"Does she know of the circumstances? That this child is wanted?"
The intern moved forward, gaining confidence in the face of Mycroft losing his patience. "Sir, I am so sorry. Please understand that it was my fault and -"

He pointed a finger at the young woman. "You have one thing right. It is your fault. I would suggest you finish your training elsewhere." He sneered in disgust. "Clearly, you lack sufficient skills to handle even the simplest of tasks."

He spun on his heel and left, umbrella clenched tightly in his fist. Once he was back in his car he quickly called Anthea, appraising her of the situation with a strongly worded suggestion of having Susan Teserero transferred to the WHO vaccination and medical program in some distant country, far from London. He would not tolerate fools.

Anthea also set up the tasks of identifying who the recipient was, as well as determining what Dr. Watson was doing at the clinic. After all, family was important and he had assured his brother that he would care for Joanne. She had become a part of the Holmes family whether she acknowledged it or not. Thankfully, this would not be too arduous a task. The NHS had recently taken to fully digitalizing almost everything. It was just a matter of time.

The car pulled up to 221B and Mycroft tapped the knocker, straightening it as a very flustered Mrs. Hudson opened the door. What was wrong with everyone today?

"Oh! Thank goodness you're here. He's been in a right strop and Joanne isn't here to calm him down! I don't think my poor walls can take it if he keeps going the way that he is." Her hands fluttered at the hem of her blouse and Mycroft gave her a small smile to let her know he would handle the situation.

A resounding crash came from upstairs and Mrs. Hudson flinched. "Oh my, that is coming out of his rent!" She muttered and went into 221A, leaving the elder Holmes to deal with him.

Sherlock was pacing, his face a furious scowl despite the purpling bruise on his cheek. He whirled around and upon seeing his brother, his face darkened further, an accusing finger pointing. "You! You hypocrite! You dare to ridicule me when I show sentiment and affection and you are choosing to...to...breed!"

Mycroft moved back as if his words had physically assaulted him. "I don't see how my fulfilling my filial obligation is any of your business." He snapped back.

"It is when it is my friend who is being forced to carry your spawn!"

Sherlock's words caused him to stop, his mouth opening and closing soundlessly as his brother continued his tirade.

"I suppose it was too much to hope that you could have left her alone and found someone else. One of your minions perhaps? One of my informants discovered the truth moments ago, citing that it was a mistake by a junior doctor and I suppose it just happened to be sheer coincidence that Watson was the recipient? And it just so happened that you were present when she fell ill yesterday? That a doctor was sent to check on her? That you are showing such a keen interest in her health?" He sneered. "The universe is rarely so lazy as to have such things as coincidences."

Joanne Watson? She was the recipient? She was carrying his child? While Sherlock was correct that coincidences didn't usually happen, it didn't mean that they never did. He tried to imagine Joanne Watson pregnant with their child but flashes of her running into danger alongside his brother in their adrenaline rushed career choice made him feel sick. The flat where they lived was basically a Petri dish of dangerous bacterial substances that weren't safe for a pregnant woman or a baby. Her long
hours that she worked at the clinic and with Sherlock weren't healthy either.

These issues could all be rectified quickly but first he needed to correct Sherlock’s misinterpretation of the facts. "Let me make one thing clear, little brother, I would never have chosen Joanne Watson to be the mother of my child."

He didn't get the chance to finish his statement. A dull clunk came from behind him and both men turned their focus to the doorway. Watson had dropped her jacket on the floor, her face pale and mouth gaping at the two of them.

Sherlock recovered first, stepping forward to greet her but she stepped back to stay out of reach. "I knew you couldn't just mind your own damn business, Sherlock!" She spat.

Mycroft tried to get close to her, only to be rebuffed just as swiftly. "No. Just. No. Not right now." She shook her head, backing away. Neither of them had a chance to say a word before she fled.

Both flinched at the door slamming and Mrs. Hudson's gasp of shock. Normally, Jo was the calming influence for the both of them.

Mycroft turned to glare at his brother. "You just had to go and try to show off and one-up me on knowledge! For once in your life, brother, shut up and listen! I had nothing to do with this. Sometimes there are such things as coincidences." His hands curled into fists and he could feel his face heat in anger and frustration. "I am getting older and my chances at having a child of my own are dwindling. It truly was the ineptitude of a so-called doctor that caused this."

He forced himself to calm down, breathing heavily. "And while I would never have chosen Dr. Watson because of her close association with danger, I cannot deny that she would make an excellent mother given her proclivity for being able to handle immature Holmes men like yourself."

"While you may feel that way, who's to say she intends to keep it?" Sherlock lifted the dropped jacket and picked up the two small prescription bottles that had fallen out of her pocket, holding them out for him to see.

Mycroft remembered Dr. Simon telling her that the recipient was intending to terminate. Perhaps it was a good sign that Watson had yet to administer the fatal medication. He could work with indecision. "She hasn't yet."

Mycroft took the bottles and pocketed them, despite Sherlock's clear disapproval. "This is not an ideal situation for anyone. This may be my only chance and I am determined to give it a try." He took a deep breath, eyes softening when he looked at his brother. Mycroft remembered Sherlock as a curly-haired mischievous child and how much joy he had brought into their home when he was small.

Their mum had often lamented the fact that she had not had more children and now that there weren’t grandchildren she had taken to mentioning it frequently during her visits. His arrangement with Giselle had been cold but functional, the end result being the goal.

There was a major problem though. Whereas most people would simply fold under pressure from him or at the promise of a monetary reward, Watson was impressively stubborn. However, she had very strong morals. The thought of baring his secrets to convince Joanne to continue the pregnancy was anathema to him but if it would work, it would be worth it.

Joanne tended to be discreet and very private. It was unlikely she would advertise what truly happened and the reasons behind it.
"Allow me to warn you, Mycroft. You have seen what I am willing to do to protect the ones that I care about." Oh...he remembered the CIA agents that had hurt Mrs. Hudson.

"I will not have you threatening, intimidating or laying a single finger on Watson. You will not coerce her or manipulate her." He threatened.

Mycroft looked at Sherlock's cheek to make a point. "I am relatively certain the Miss Watson can handle herself."

Sherlock puffed out his chest. "It's not me she's angry with."

Rolling his eyes, Mycroft crossed his arms. "I rather think it's both of us."

xXx page break xXx

Watson sipped on her cup of tea, watching the water fountain at Hyde Park. Sometimes, she just wanted to strangle Sherlock. Well...Mycroft, too but his murder was a more rare thought.

Both Sherlock's and Mycroft's words were swirling in her head, building speed like a hurricane and it only made it harder to think. She was carrying Mycroft's child? She didn't even realize he had been trying for a baby. Did it make it better or worse that it was someone she knew? Did it make it better or worse that it was Mycroft Holmes? Joanne laughed a bit at the morbid thought.

She watched as a lady pushed her pram, hurrying against the cold and trying to soothe a fussy baby. Could she do that? Should she? She was getting older but she should have had more of a say...or a say at all in this. Her life was just getting started again and a baby was a lot of work.

Joanne frowned. And then there was the issue of Mycroft. He was nosy enough as it was without adding being tied to him in a familial way more than her partnership with his brother. And even though she knew that the woman that was supposed to have been the recipient hadn't been a girlfriend or wife, it had to have still affected her. Maybe she had wanted this. Maybe Mycroft could simply try again.

Shivering, Jo brought her tea closer, trying to inhale it's warmth. Even if she terminated, things would be different now that they knew. Things would be different with either decision. Sometimes Joanne wished she didn't know those two Holmeses. Smiling, she realized her life would be pretty dull without them.

It was early afternoon but it was still chilly and the tea left a lot to be desired in keeping her warm. She was too stubborn to head home after her display. She was rethinking her decision when she felt the air shift around her and a large expensive coat was draped across her shoulders.

"Not right now means I needed time to think." She murmured but immediately felt better and much warmer. The smell of expensive cologne, books and leather surrounded her and the tension left her.

"I know. You can still think while avoiding hypothermia."

Jo smiled and shook her head.

The bench creaked to her left and Mycroft sat next to her not saying anything, just sitting and watching. Five minutes passed before the silence was broken.

Jo turned to her left. "It was an accident, right?"
The October wind swirled and caught her hair forcing her to tuck it into her borrowed coat and close it tighter around herself.

"Most definitely, but not the worst I have ever had happen." He turned to face her and Joanne could see desperation in his eyes. "I had made arrangements, but this changed the way things were supposed to have gone. I would never have asked this of you because you have your own life to live. I understand that you never planned for this." A deep breath. "This was supposed to be an impossibility, a vain hope to have a child of my own and it may not be successful another time."

It felt like her heart was being squeezed hearing Mycroft talk. She had had many other patients go through the varying stages of infertility and despair at the small success rates.

"So, you've been trying for a while?"

"For several years. First I tried the traditional way to start a family. Dating but it never quite amounted to much. As you know, Sherlock and I are quite difficult to get along with on our best days." He smiled and Jo shrugged.

"You're both not that bad. Just...different."

"Well, you're in the minority." He leaned over and turned the collar on her coat up even though she rolled her eyes.

"I even proposed once." He sighed and shifted in his seat. "Suzanne. American. You can imagine Sherlock's thrill at the accent."

She could. He would have been mortified.

"My work started keeping me away more and then Sherlock started having problems and when Suzanne wanted to start to try and have a family we found out that it would be nearly impossible because of me. Suzanne felt isolated. Neglected and alone. She left after a year and called off the wedding."

Joanne frowned. She'd never really thought of Mycroft having a life outside of what he did.

"It was several years before I underwent testing again and the doctors determined that if I didn't attempt again soon that it would be unlikely that I would ever have a child that was biologically mine. That was when I contracted a woman who was to be a surrogate and here we are." He held out his gloved hands, palms up showing that he was offering her his past.

She knew that neither Sherlock or Mycroft said anything lightly when it came to themselves and the elder Holmes was offering a lot of himself. She eyed him to determine if he was telling the truth. She knew Sherlock well enough but Mycroft was still an enigma to her.

"Why do you want a child? You never struck me as the paternal type."

Mycroft turned to watch the people milling around them. "I think it's more of a wish to continue my genetics, to be able to experience things again as if for the first time." He sighed and looked back at Jo. "It has been a very long time since something has surprised me."

Somehow she didn't think that it was just the baby that he was talking about.

He moved his hand to hold hers, the supple leather soft and warm against her cold fingers. "I would never have asked this of you if I had a choice not because of who you are but because it is a lot to ask of someone. Please understand I will support whatever decision you make but you'll have to
forgive me if I am hoping for your agreement."

"Alright." She answered. He brightened, looking frighteningly hopeful (Now that was a weird and very unnerving expression on him!) and Joanne put a hand up. "I'll think about it. I just need you and Sherlock to back off."

Mycroft eyed her and Jo read him loud and clear. It was along the lines of 'Do you really think that is going to happen?'.

She stood and started to shrug off his coat and Mycroft stopped her. "Keep it."

"Don't be daft!" Mycroft pursed his lips and narrowed his eyes pointedly. Jo rolled her eyes but relented and buttoned up the coat even though it was way too big.

"Thank you. I'll talk to you tomorrow. Just...give me time."

She still had one other Holmes to talk to.
Chapter 6

Chapter Notes

Sorry for the delay. I only hope it was worth the wait! Please review. It definitely adds guilt to get me going! :)

Chapter Six

Joanne wandered for a bit, enjoying the solitude and people watching before she headed home, much calmer than when she had left. She'd just shut the door when Mrs. Hudson rushed out, looking her over from head to toe and clucking in disapproval at what she saw.

"You're looking a bit poorly. And wandering about when it's so cold without a proper coat? It's a good thing that that brother of Sherlock's gave you his coat."

The older woman ushered her in, pushing a hot cup of tea into her hands and a plate of homemade biscuits at her. She had little choice but to accept them.

"I saw him rushing out after you left. They had been making such a ruckus upstairs and went ever so quiet when you left." Jo could see that Mrs. Hudson was fishing for gossip and so she busied herself with drinking her tea, keeping her mouth occupied.

"I would have gone after you but with my hip not being what it used to be..." Mrs. Hudson paused expectantly and Jo quickly agreed on the issue.

"I must admit I am curious as to what made you so cross. I've never..."

A loud bang from upstairs stopped Mrs. Hudson's prying and Watson sighed, knowing that she couldn't put off speaking with her annoying but well-meaning flat mate any longer.

She quickly excused herself and went upstairs, spotting Sherlock bent over the kitchen table. On closer inspection, she could see him using a glass dropper and putting drops of hydrochloride acid on...

"Sherlock, you twat! Is that my jumper?"

He looked up, goggles covering his grey eyes. "Well, I needed a low quality fabric to test..."

She glared and he faltered slightly. "Why is it always my jumpers?" Joanne sighed, exasperated.

"Well, you weren't here to protest, so I had assumed-" He moved to another swatch of the cream colored fabric.

"Stop. I swear I just don't know what to do with you. Maybe I should just bring down all of them to make it easier? After all, I know how much you hate them." Jo asked sarcastically.

"I prefer to make the pleasure last."

"Be serious. I need to talk to you." She groaned as he pointedly flourished the dropper and added a
few drops to the fabric, watching it dissolve and added a note into the small pad next to him.

Joanne ran a hand down her face and walked to the refrigerator, almost stumbling when she saw that it had been fully stocked, no hints of purple milk or body parts and, not one, but six different kinds of milk, whole, skimmed, semi-skimmed, rice milk, soy milk and almond. It was filled with an eclectic mix of foods as if it was done by a madman and, in a way, Jo supposed it had been.

She could see in the corner of her eye Sherlock pausing and watching her, his lips pursed and expression serious as he waited for her reaction to his peace offering. She couldn't help the smile that crept onto her face. Joanne could see this was his way of apologizing. She had been asking him for months to dispose of the toes molding in the crisper and here he goes and makes the whole fridge safe for humans...living ones.

Grabbing the bottle of juice (no surprise that he picked her favorite) and pouring herself a glass, she took off Mycroft's coat and sat down at the table. Sherlock's hand was still poised over a scrap of her former clothing and she could see he was still nervously anticipating her scolding.

"Look, I know you were concerned but I can look after myself. I have been for far longer than I've known you and I would have told you if it would have been something serious." She watched as he put the equipment down, his eyes intense and stormy grey as he brought his full focus onto her.

"The real question though is would you have told me about this, Joanne, because it is just as serious."

And wasn't that the crux of the matter? Sherlock was her best friend. He had been there during both her highs and her lows. Jo fiddled with her glass, stalling as she thought about her answer. "The truth is I just don't know. You took that option away from me." She sighed. "I think I would have. I'd like to think so but I would have wanted time and privacy to make a decision."

She could see the regret in his eyes but there was hurt too. Hurt at the realization that she might have kept him in the dark. "I will support you, Joanne Watson, in whatever decision you make. I will not judge you." He reached out and held her free hand, squeezing it to emphasize his words and it bolstered her.

And maybe that was what she had needed. The support of her friend.

"However, I reserve the right to continue to educate you in the flaws of my brother. I still maintain that he had to have been adopted." He said this so seriously that she couldn't help laughing.

Taking a sip of her juice, Jo relaxed. The moment she swallowed, her mouth watered unpleasantly, her face suddenly felt clammy and she lost her color. Sherlock quickly handed her his waste basket as she threw up.

"I hope you realize that this is your body's attempt to expel something that isn't natural. Namely, the offspring of my brother. You do know it might be ginger." Sherlock smirked as she heaved over the bin and she flipped him off.

Sherlock handed her water to rinse her mouth and took the bin, quickly dumping it and rinsing it in the bathroom while she lay her head on the table feeling drained. A glass was put in front of her and she looked at it in puzzlement.

"It's ginger ale. It's supposed to help with...this." His hands made a vague all-encompassing gesture that Jo supposed meant her and morning sickness.

"Thanks." She mumbled and grudgingly sipped at the drink. That was when it hit her. Not only had
Sherlock apologized by cleaning the refrigerator but he had stocked it according to the diet for a pregnant woman. The ginger ale...another home remedy for pregnant women. Sherlock had researched. All to help her if she chose to keep the baby without voicing his opinion but, despite his words, she could feel the pressure.

"You still owe me a new jumper."

Sherlock started to protest but Jo put up a hand to forestall his argument. "I am all for furthering science but not at the cost of my wardrobe."

The consulting detective sulked. "But you weren't going to fit in it-"

She sent him a glare warning him to go no further about her size and he was wise enough to heed her warning. Sherlock's phone chimed and he lit up.

"Case! Finally!" He swept through the flat like an overgrown toddler, practically vibrating with excitement. Jo smiled, very glad for the distraction.

"Come along, Jo."

"Not a dog." Rolling her eyes and smiling, Watson grabbed her jacket and followed her mad flatmate out.

xXxpgebreakxXx

Joanne wondered just what Lestrade had for them when they pulled up to an upscale building. Exiting the cab, the hairs on the nape of Joanne's neck raised giving her the feeling of being watched. Sherlock strode ahead of her to the entrance, forgetting to pay the cabbie and leaving her behind. Jo lingered, eyes scanning her surroundings.

"Jo!"

Sherlock's shout brought her search to a stop and she shrugged off her suspicions as paranoia, paid and walked into the set of flats.

She followed Sherlock under the police tape and immediately felt like throwing up again as an horrendous smell hit her. They were in a loft-style flat, a small brunette woman hanging from an exposed beam with a chair kicked over under her.

"Oh, God! Why'd you call him in? It's a simple suicide." Anderson sneered as he stalked over to them. It wasn't the smell of a body making her gag.

Sherlock looked him up and down. "Once again, wrong but right now Watson is trying to decide."

"Decide what?"

"Whether it's your face, your stupidity or that excuse for aftershave that you're wearing is going to make her throw up. Do stop your attempts at wooing back Donovan. She's moved on." A few sniggers from the other officers only added to Anderson's anger as he turned a very interesting shade of puce.

They were both saved by his angry reply by DI Lestrade. "This is Susan Thomas. Approximate time of death is two days ago. She was found by her wife, Kelly Thomas." He nodded over towards the kitchen where a woman was sobbing into the shoulder of a young man who was staring at the scene with haunted, bloodshot eyes. "She says that Susan's been depressed for a while since she's been
away for business in Paris for the past three months. She got home this morning. It looks like a simple suicide but the wife's brother, Michael, is adamant that it isn't."

Sherlock eyed the siblings. "He's right."

Lestrade rolled his eyes. "Care to share with the class?"

"The wife did it."

Lestrade gaped for a moment before composing himself. "She has an alibi. She was in-

"France which is accessible via the tunnel within a matter of hours. All she would have to do is rent a car and drive back after. The rope is too short, her feet wouldn't reach the chair. Yes, she was strangled but not by rope, by hands. You can see the scratches under her chin and near the nape of the neck. Her bruising is inconsistent with a rope. Check under the victims fingernails for DNA. There are defensive wounds." The consulting detective flapped his hands at the victim in poorly concealed irritation.

Lestrade moved closer. Jo watched the woman who's crying had calmed as she watched and listened to them. "There's not even a motive. Why would Kelly murder the woman she'd been happily married to for five years?"

"Because she was having an affair with her wife's brother and was leaving her. She was pregnant with his child. Notice her ring is missing, there's a rucksack by the door and-"

"Alright. Alright."

Sherlock huffed and crossed his arms. "This wasn't even a two. I know that even Anderson would have eventually figured this out."

"Well, to be honest," He glanced at Jo. "I was wanting to see how you were. When I heard what happened I tried calling but your mobile was off and Sherlock wasn't answering either. Are you alright?"

She smiled at her friend's concern. "I'm fine. Just didn't eat enough and was tired."

Jo ignored Sherlock's sharp look at her answer while Greg looked skeptical. "If you're sure..."

"She said she's fine, Geoffrey."

"Greg." He corrected.

"I'm fine."

"Well, if you feel up to it, on Friday a few of us were going out. Pub quiz at the Fox and Crown."

"She's busy." Sherlock interrupted tersely.

"I'd love to." They both spoke at the same time and Greg looked uncomfortable.

"I'll-er- text you the details." He said, looking from one to the other.

Grey eyes narrowed at Jo while she finished with Lestrade. As they were leaving she could hear Mrs. Thomas screaming obscenities, most likely being placed in cuffs.

The feeling of being watched came back as soon as they got to the pavement. Jo's eyes darted around
and settled on a bloke reading the paper across the way.

"I think we're being watched." She whispered and the consulting detective followed her eyeline, immediately growling.

"Mycroft."

"What?" She'd always known he was protective of his brother but she'd never seen his attempts this obviously before. "Why is he having you followed? You didn't do anything, did you?" She asked suspiciously.

He threw out an arm for a cab. "It's not me he's watching. It's you."

"What?"

He shrugged with disinterest and pulled up his coat collar. "Well, not only you. I'm sure his minion is reporting on my activities as well, but he's focused on you." Throwing out an arm to signal a cab, he smirked. "It's annoying being the focus of his concern, isn't it?"

A black cab pulled up. Jo's heart sped up in anxiety at the thought of being watched. "Why would he-"

"You're carrying his child. Of course he's going to increase security. As long as they aren't complete idiots and don't get in the way when we're working then I guess I can tolerate their presence."

"How considerate of you but I still don't see- hold on. You said increase security. Do you mean to tell me that he's been having us watched before this?"

Sherlock wasn't looking at her, focusing on his phone and texting. "Watching, yes. Protecting, not as such unless necessary. They kept their distance but I assume, since they've gotten more obvious, that their orders have changed."

Jo eyed the man with the paper. "MI-6, if you're wondering." Sherlock whispered, causing her to jump and remember that they were supposed to be entering the cab.

"I wasn't."

Sherlock sighed and gave the address for home. "While I disagree with Mycroft on many counts, this is one instance where I think he is acting appropriately."

The blond frowned incredulously and turned to face her friend and Sherlock moved closer to talk lowly, preventing the driver from hearing him, his breath warm against her neck. "You remember when I told you that he was the most dangerous man you've ever met? Imagine his enemies. Imagine if they ever found out that you were carrying something precious to him. That you might be important to him?"

It was as if a bucket of ice water had been dropped on her and she shivered at the implication despite the warmth of the cab. The rest of the ride was silent and the air heavy with the weight of what Sherlock told her. It was yet another factor in making her decision and the clock was ticking, hanging over her like Damocles sword, swinging ever closer.

They got back to their home, Sherlock paying the fare because he could see Jo's thoughts were elsewhere. He shuffled her up the steps and inside.
"I told you, not to frighten you, but to inform you of the risks. Mycroft likes to maintain the illusion of occupying a minor position but there are always risks."

Frowning, Watson sank into her chair and put her head into her hands. "What should I do? What would you do if you were in my position?" Her voice was muffled but Sherlock understood her and sat across from her in his own chair, steepling his fingers underneath his chin.

"I cannot give you an answer. This is a decision that you will have to make on your own, placing your own beliefs, morals and wishes ahead of others. A rare occurrence for you."

Groaning, she rubbed at her face and sat up. "Alright. Fair enough. How about if I decided to have the baby? Would you be ok with having a baby in Baker Street?" She swallowed nervously. "Would you be ok with having Mycroft's baby in Baker Street?"

"I can assure you Mrs. Hudson would be happy irregardless of the parentage. She does rather enjoy caring for people, especially small ones."

Risk and danger didn't bother her. Maybe it was because from day one of her adult life, when she heard danger, she went running towards it and not away from it. It was just how she was. She knew she would be fine if she had her friend's support.

"I suppose that since half of it's genetic make-up is from you, it might make it more tolerable." He grinned widely. "And I might be able to influence it correctly to help it be something moderately interesting. A true test of nature versus nurture."

Jo snorted. "Be serious."

Sherlock smiled, his face soft. "I would not mind a baby here in Baker Street."

Jo let out a breath she didn't know she'd been holding.

She knew she was getting older and didn't exactly have other prospects for having a traditional family on the horizon. The thought of terminating this small life growing wasn't a pleasant one. She could already see small feet running around the flat, tiny hands reaching for her and hear giggles and laughter. Well, what was traditional anyway? Boring.

Jo smiled, eyes bright. "Okay."
Chapter 7

Chapter Notes

So sorry for my lack of updating. Things have been hectic. I know it's not much of an excuse but I hope you'll forgive me. I would love to hear your thoughts and absolutely adore comments! Thank you for reading!

Chapter Seven

Mycroft closed the folder on the latest in a string of foreign political uprisings. It had been a long week and he had yet to hear from Dr. Watson in regards to her decision. Although, he wouldn't lie. He had been keeping closer tabs on her and his brother as of late and what he had viewed seemed promising despite Sherlock successfully removing his surveillance equipment from their flat.

His last update had been of Doctor Watson leaving the clinic and heading home to Baker Street. His few clear images of her showed that she seemed extremely fatigued. In fact, during one ride on the tube, she had fallen asleep while standing upright, leaving her rather vulnerable to a pickpocket. Fortunately, his agent had managed to return the items to her person before they had been missed.

He decided a visit was in order. "If Mohammed won't come to the mountain..." He sighed and called for a car, quickly closing down all of his programs and putting away files. By the time he had finished, his sleek black sedan was waiting.

The ride was quick, most of the rush hour traffic had cleared for the day. His desire to acquiesce to Joanne's desire for space was warring with his own wishes to know and plan for their future. He was a man who did not enjoy being surprised and Joanne Watson was anything but predictable. He allowed himself a moment to wonder about the future. If she decided to have their child what would he be like? Would it even be a little boy or would it be a girl? Would she have blonde hair and be adventurous like the good doctor or would he be a small, shy, auburn boy much like how he was as a child? Would he have Joanne's kind blue eyes or would she have Mycroft's knowing grey?

Would there even be a child? The possibility was gut wrenching.

The car pulled up to 221's black door and Mycroft steeled himself, slamming down a wall and pushing his hopes and emotions behind them. He picked up his umbrella and slid out the door, walking up the steps to hopefully know what his future held.

He eyed the skewed knocker and had only a moment to sigh in frustration that his brother wasn't out when the door swung open.

"Sherlock." He greeted, tapping his umbrella on the tip of his shoe.

Sherlock sighed dramatically, rolling his eyes and walking up the stairs, leaving the door open in invitation.

"She's asleep on the settee."

Mycroft's patience was thin. There was no indication from his brother as to what Joanne's decision was.
Sherlock hesitated halfway up the stairs to answer his unasked question. "It's not my place to say."

They both walked in and Mycroft saw Joanne sleeping as his brother had said. He took a moment to look at her closely. Her long blond was still in her utilitarian pony-tail but it had become skewed, tiny loose strands curled around her face. In sleep, she looked younger, the stresses of the day smoothed away. He noticed, with displeasure, that she seemed to have lost weight. Just a slight hollowing of her cheeks. Not enough for most to see but for him it was child's play. She was still in her work clothes, tan trousers and a blue blouse, her jumper having been discarded on the back of the settee.

She had a set of keys in her left hand clutched in a loose fist on her chest while her left rested on her abdomen. He watched as she shivered and turned on her side, facing away from him.

Sherlock walked over with a red, rather worn looking blanket. A shock blanket, likely from one of their many exploits. He carefully covered her and stepped back.

Mycroft couldn't help but think of her as fragile underneath that blanket.

Sherlock's deep baritone interrupted his musings. "She has no idea how powerful her position is right now. She is literally holding the British government hostage with her decision."

Sherlock's words could not have been any closer to the truth if he tried. "I am hardly the British government, brother. You do flatter me." Mycroft scoffed but he could see Sherlock knew better.

Sherlock waited only a moment longer but grabbed his belstaf and spun around clutching the pilfered keys. "Well, brother mine, crime has no clock so I must be off. One thing-" he was almost out the door, "-as far as Joanne is aware, it was you who had her patient Mark Sampson reassigned. He attacked two previous doctors when he stopped taking his medication and was likely to not be med compliant for long."

Mycroft had no chance to reply before Sherlock slammed the door causing Dr. Watson to startle awake. She sat up, her eyes unfocused before she patted herself down and realized the keys she had been holding were missing. "Cheat!"

Kicking off the blankets, she stomped to the door and opened it, clearly about to shout towards her retreating flat mate when she finally noticed Mycroft standing in her sitting room. "Oh."

She nervously ran her hands down her top in an attempt to smooth the wrinkled material. "Um..Mycroft." She swiped a hand over her face and took a deep breath. "Tea?"

It was rare to see her caught off guard. Her neck and cheeks pinked as she tried to straighten her hair and appear in control. She was nervous. "I'll just-um-tea." Joanne quickly left into the kitchen.

Mycroft followed to the kitchen table and took a seat, setting his umbrella on the unoccupied seat next to him. He noticed a pronounced lack of body parts. In fact, he saw a smaller second refrigerator next to their usual one. The table was practically covered in an unusual assortment of padlocks though. For them, this was practically a safe environment.

Joanne shuffled through the cupboards, seemingly grateful at the chance to perhaps stall their conversation. She set the tea to steep and Mycroft noticed the refrigerator stocked with food and clean. This was an encouraging sign. He looked around while Joanne let the tea steep and also saw a bottle of prenatal vitamins, definitely used.

She turned and handed him a mug and placed the cream and sugar on the table, sitting down
opposite. "Sorry. Sherlock wrecked the tea set. I think he was growing mold to see how it manifests in bone china compared to ceramic mugs."

He gave a small smile and took a sip, surprised that she was always able to make an excellent cup of tea. "This is fine."

Joanne took a deep breath. "I'm sorry I haven't talked to you sooner. I didn't want to bother you until I had an answer."

Mycroft was sure of her answer but he needed to hear it from her. To have more proof than what he could deduce from their surroundings.

"I've decided to have the baby."

It was like a weight had been lifted from his shoulders, to know that things fell into place despite it not being according to plan. He let out a deep breath, letting his relief show.

"But you need to calm down on the surveillance and micromanaging. Nothing is going to happen to me and I can take care of myself. I have been doing it for most of my life, you know."

Tilting his head and raising his eyebrows, Mycroft looked at her in disbelief. "You do deal with rather unsavory characters and tend to neglect yourself in favor of caring for Sherlock. Just the other week you fainted due to overwork."

"I did not faint. I collapsed." Joanne's cheeks turned pink and her eyes flashed, the blue bright in irritation and embarrassment. "And besides, that was due to unforeseen circumstances and a one off."

"Moriarty, General Shan-" Mycroft started but Watson put up her hand. "Alright, alright. Just...keep them to where I don't see them and don't mess around with my patients. It's hard to build up a level of trust when they're suddenly swapped to another clinic without an explanation. I have a duty of care."

"As do I, Doctor Watson." He sent her a deliberate look, imploring her to understand without telling her or agreeing to her stipulations.

Jo sighed and nodded. "I understand, Mycroft, and I promise that I am being careful." She brought her hands close to his but hesitated before making contact and pulled away, clearly unsure at how open she could be with him, if he would welcome the contact.

"Well-" She cleared her throat and straightened in her seat. Mycroft knew she was nervous around him. "I have an appointment next week. I don't know how involved you want to be so-"

"I will be there."

Joanne's eyes snapped up to his. "It's nothing exciting. You don't have to. I know you're busy-"

"If you have no objections to it, I would very much like to be there." He reached out to capture Joanne's hand and pulled it towards his, covering her smaller, delicate hands in his larger pair. He could feel the callouses from when she handled her weapon, the subtle strength in her fingers from years of working with her hands in the medical field. Surgeon's hands that never got a chance before it was stripped away by that fateful bullet to her shoulder. It may have stolen that career path from her but it had brought her to him and Sherlock.

"I wasn't going to have much of a chance to be involved had the original plan happened. I had assumed the end result was all that was necessary but-" he paused, thinking of the opportunity
afforded him with Joanne being the person carrying his child rather than a hired surrogate. "I find this to be a much more pleasant alternative."

"Well, you're not the one who's going to have to push an eight pound baby out of you so I think it's definitely more pleasant for you." Joanne replied with a smile.

"Thank you." He released her hand and sipped at his, now tepid tea.

She smiled and smoothed her hair. "You're welcome."

They were brought out of their silence by the doorbell ringing, the sounds of feet climbing the stairs. "Yoo-hoo! Joanne?"

Mrs. Hudson tapped on the door, peeking around before walking in. She looked between the two of them, a slight frown appearing on her face. Likely concerned that there was something wrong with Sherlock.

"There's a gentleman here for you." Running her hands down her apron, Martha Hudson didn't look happy about it.

"Oh, my god! Patrick! I completely forgot." Jo stood, pulling her hair loose from it's tie and running her fingers through it. Mrs. Hudson clucked her tongue disapprovingly and opened the door wider to let in "Patrick". She shook her head as she left.

An older man walked in, mid-forties, balding but had recently had a hair transplant in a vain attempt to disguise his true age. The suit he wore was mid-level quality, off the rack. Likely, he was an accountant or low-level solicitor. He eyed the man's stance, hunched slightly, usually bent over a computer, ink stain on his tie. An accountant seemed more likely. The faded tan line on his ring finger indicated he was recently divorced, no, separated.

"Hi! You must be Patrick. Sara's told me so much about you. I just need to finish getting ready for our date. I thought it was tomorrow." Joanne smiled pleasantly and a surge of jealousy went through him. Wait. Why would he be jealous? Joanne wasn't his but the feeling still burned through him. Maybe it was the fact that this person was undeserving of her.

A date?!? The thought of it seemed to settle in him like an unpleasant aftertaste, sour and bitter at the same time. He wasn't sure what he had expected of Joanne Watson but the thought of her dating while carrying their child was an extremely unpleasant one. He had considered her health, her safety but he had neglected considering her relationship status. He knew that she wasn't shy or a recluse but it was a harsh reminder that she was socially active despite the demands on her time placed by her work and Sherlock.

"This is my flatemate's brother, Mycroft Holmes. He was just leaving." She looked at him pointedly and Mycroft could see her tactic of trying to hide everything. "I'll see you next week." She dismissed him and ran up the stairs.

He debated contradicting her to be able to collect more information on this latest development but ultimately decided to bow out gracefully. Joanne's date smiled awkwardly at him, holding out a hand to shake that he did not accept. "It was nice to meet you, Mycroft."

He returned the smile, though his was a closer resemblance to a shark's. "Mr. Holmes, please. And your name?"

Patrick lowered his hand awkwardly, sensing the tension. "Patrick Goodall."
"Have a pleasant evening." He left Joanne's date standing there nervous and unsure with a strange feeling of satisfaction in his chest.
Chapter Eight

Joanne knelt, grimacing at the grimy water now soaking into the knee of her favorite pair of jeans. She and Sherlock peeked over the low garden wall and could see the exchange of money taking place. She had her mobile recording the whole thing but she could see that Sherlock was itching to take them down. He had been positive that Mr. Dunbar had paid someone to kill his mistress and here was the proof.

Sherlock started to move and Joanne grabbed a handful of his coat to keep him down. "Don't you dare!" She hissed and a moment later they saw their hitman turn and a gun in his hip holster. She quickly sent off a text with the video to Greg along with the address, hoping that they would hurry.

Dunbar and the hitman were finishing up when a swarm of police cars descended. Sherlock's eyes locked with hers for a moment, his indecision clear. Joanne had only a moment before Sherlock darted out of her grip. Dunbar immediately surrendered but the hitman ran, Sherlock hot on his tail. Joanne took a step to follow but it felt like a ball and chain suddenly locked her in place. Fear. Fear of getting hurt and losing the baby.

She took an aborted step to chase behind them when she was almost overrun by several constables. "They went that way!" Joanne pointed at the direction that the pair went, feeling guilt and shame for not following. She had never let Sherlock go before without backup. "Be careful. He has a gun!" She shouted to their backs.

She walked out, feeling like a traitor and spied Greg shoving Dunham into the police car. Sergeant Donovan spotted her and started walking her way.

"Where's your boyfriend?"

"He's not my boyfriend, Sally." Joanne sighed.

She looked around, her curls bouncing. "Well, you two are always together in the thick of things. Why's he gone off on his own?" She looked closer. "Have you two had a falling out?"

"No. I just thought he could handle this one on his own." Joanne lied. She soon spotted Sherlock looking satisfied behind the two constables dragging their suspect. She let out the breath she had been holding in relief.

"Come off it, Watson. You never leave his side. What's he done? Put fingers in your marmalade?"

Joanne rolled her eyes and waited for Sherlock to finish with Lestrade who was shoving the second suspect into another car. She could see Lestrade's lips thin and his face frown and she knew that it was a familiar argument between the pair. Sherlock hated filing the reports after. He saw paperwork as tedious.

Sighing, Joanne walked over.

"We have already provided video evidence. What more could you possibly need?" Sherlock protested, already on his phone and trying to extricate himself from Lestrade.

Joanne saw the DI rearing up and stepped in to deflect him. "I'll go in, Greg."
Sherlock's eyes flicked over and immediately rolled skyward. "If you must. I have to say, New
Scotland Yard must be slipping if they need written testimony in addition to actual video evidence,
George."

"It's standard procedure and my name is Greg." Lestrade growled.

Sighing, Sherlock gave him a pained look before turning to Joanne. "Don't forget to eat." Sherlock
told her as he left, coat swishing behind him.

She could feel Lestrade's eyes on her and she knew he hadn't missed Sherlock's not so subtle
reminder.

"What's that all about, then?"

Joanne ignored the question and shrugged, turning and gesturing to the car, ready to get the reports
done. They climbed in and she knew he wasn't done.

"I'm a bit worried about you. Is there a reason I need to be? I saw you weren't as active chasing after
Sherlock." He looked over at her and she could see the worry in his brown eyes. "Then there's the
fact that not too long ago you collapsed in front of the station and now you've got a self proclaimed
sociopath reminding you to take care of yourself instead of the other way around. Is there something
I need to know?" He asked as he drove.

Joanne debated telling him. It would come out sooner or later. Soon there would be no hiding her
pregnancy. As it was, her trousers and jeans were already impossible to button up and close. She'd
had to use an elastic to make room and had taken to wearing longer jumpers to hide things. It was
hard for her to tell people things. She didn't mind talking but she was typically pretty private and
people would definitely have questions. She just wasn't sure how to answer them.

Lestrade's eyes darted to her occasionally, keeping an eye on her as he drove and she could see he
was worried.

"Are you sick?" He asked.

Joanne took a deep breath. "No, Greg. I'm fine. I'm just going through some stuff."

Lestrade's jaw clenched and he frowned, hurt that she wasn't confiding in him. "Just...just remember
that I'm here if you need to talk."

"I know, mate. Ta." Joanne gave a tight smile, feeling guilt a deflecting her friend's concern.

On the way to the station Greg talked about the upcoming rugby match between England and New
Zealand but Joanne only listened with half an ear, her thoughts fully centered on tomorrow
afternoon's doctor appointment and with the problem of just what she was going to tell people.

Mycroft had been to two of her prenatal appointments which had been little more than mere
formalities. She had steadfastly refused him entrance during any private exams but allowed him in to
talk with the doctor. Joanne had allowed him to change her doctor to London Pregnancy Care on
Tooley Street because a Holmes was a force of nature and, sometimes, it was just best to let them
win. She didn't mind the new doctor, a James Thomlinson, but she did sense that he wasn't
approving of her...or more accurately, her career choices.

His comments about her taking it easy, resting more, and patronizing attempts to cater towards the
ideals set forth by men who believe that once a woman is pregnant she should stop everything and
that they were incapable of taking care of themselves was exactly what she had fought against her
entire life. It was as if he had conveniently forgotten that she was a doctor herself and that she had served queen and country as an officer. It was infuriating but Mycroft had said he was the best and she let it go.

She needed to talk with Mycroft but he had been away the past few days on some assignment and hadn't contacted her except to remind her of their appointment via text. Joanne was wondering just what she was supposed to tell people. Mycroft was like a shadowy figure, as noticeable as wisps of smoke in the wind and just as fast at disappearing. She knew that he was more important than he made out and that made their situation more dangerous especially with her being partially in the public eye next to Sherlock.

Could she tell her friends who the father was? Would Mycroft even be on the birth certificate? How involved would he be when the baby was born? Would he want to be there for the birth? Her face heated in embarrassment at the thought of Mycroft...or anyone for that matter seeing her like that.

Now that she was at twelve weeks she was at the end of her first trimester and this little Holmes seemed to be sticking around, Joanne wondered just what she was going to do.

"Ah, here we are." Greg smiled and pulled into the underground car park at the station.

As they made their way upstairs, she could still see Greg watching her closely. Sherlock was right. He wasn't really good at subtle but she did appreciate his concern even if it was a bit wearing. It made her a bit anxious about when she did finally tell him about the pregnancy. He was an old fashioned bloke and she hoped he would be alright with it.

xXxpagebreakxXx

Joanne growled as she juggled her papers on the tube. Because Sherlock had not helped with the final paperwork for NSY, Jo had been up half the night and had been late to work because she had overslept. Sara had been extremely unhappy, especially when Joanne reminded her she needed to leave early.

She had been forced to take her charting with her after work to finish and, was currently, trying to cram them into her rucksack to finish them when she got home. She hadn't gotten her customary call from the elder Holmes and was beginning to become a bit annoyed. This was the first appointment that would actually be memorable and not just a questions answered sort of thing. Today they were going to have a scan to check the baby's progress and basic anatomy.

She got to the clinic in record time and looked around, not spotting the elder Holmes. He was never late. It felt strange not having him there despite the fact that she hadn't even expected him to take such a keen interest before.

Jo looked around, still waiting for him to show up when her name was called by the nurse. She couldn't help feeling a slight stab of disappointment. Maybe it was becoming too real for him.

She followed the nurse into a rather posh exam room. The blinds were drawn and the ultrasound machine powered up. Her heart started to pound at the thought of seeing the proof. Seeing is believing and before it had not seemed as tangible. Maybe Mycroft was right. This appointment was more. Watson started to back up and hit a solid body.

"Now, now, Miss Watson. There's no need to be nervous. We've all had a bit of a fright before at becoming mums and dads." He guided her reluctant form to the gurney next to the machine. She wasn't frightened! Hell, she'd faced down assassins and had been to war!
The older doctor reminded Joanne of stereotypical obstetricians. He was tall, his hair cut neat and salt and pepper colored. He had a square cut chin and an air of aristocracy despite the fact that he was clearly a career man and not one to sit idly. He frequently looked at her as if he was indulging a small child and it grated on her. Then there were moments where he hinted at his disapproval of her unmarried status and various other lifestyle choices she had made. He was good, the best and kind, but he still was a dinosaur in some aspects.

"My wife was absolutely terrified with her first but by the time our third came around she was an old pro. You'll be the same when you have your second." He helped her onto the gurney.

Her second! Maybe she was a little frightened. Just a bit. She gaped at the man and strongly considered making a run for it but his nurse stood by the door making notes in her chart. She was just trying to survive this one. She was definitely not doing this again. One was enough to be getting on with.

"Just unbutton your trousers and lower them a bit so I can get a good image and measure your fundal height. It was a bit higher than expected last time." He smiled indulgently. "Maybe you've got a little rugby player in there." He chuckled and Joanne took a deep breath, lowering her trousers enough for the doctor to get her measurements in.

He frowned as he pressed down with the measuring tape, his grey eyebrows low. "Are you sure about the conception date?"

"Yes, I'm very aware of when this baby was conceived. I even have the time if you'd like." Joanne replied.

Thomlinson patted her arm. "Oh, it wouldn't be the first time a couple got the dates mixed up. It happens with everyone."

"We're not a couple," Watson said between clenched teeth and the doctor looked at her with sympathy. Oh, great. Now she had to tell people that another Holmes wasn't her boyfriend.

"Maybe in time." He ignored her reply. It was like a male version of Mrs. Hudson.

He put away the measuring tape and while the nurse took her blood pressure, pulse, and temperature, the old doctor tucked a towel around her. "Now, let's see just what this little one is up to."

The gel was cold and she hissed in discomfort but held still as the doctor put the wand on her abdomen. The screen was turned away and she waited as the doctor took measurements.

"Hmm...well, this would explain the size discrepancy." He swung the monitor towards her and Joanne's heart stopped.

Thomlinson beamed at her and she just felt sick. "Congratulations, Miss Watson. You're having twins!"

There was a roaring in her ears and she didn't hear the rest of the OB's words as he focused on sizes, location of placentas and basically giving her a guided tour of her uterus. She didn't hear anything except her heart pounding in her ears. Her eyes couldn't focus on her surrounding as she stared at the screen, seeing it labeled with 'baby A' and 'baby B'.

"Miss Watson? Are you alright?" The doctor's face appeared in front of hers. Was she even breathing?

"I...I have to go." Her voice sounded weird to her and Thomlinson looked worried, his hand touching
the inside of her wrist. The feel of it startled Jo and she jerked her hand out of his grasp and scrambled away from him.

She pulled up her trousers and left, the doctor's shouts being ignored as she left the office. The trip outside didn't even register as Joanne suddenly found herself standing on the pavement throwing up into the rubbish bin.

She was shaking. She couldn't bloody believe it. There were two! -the fuck! Joanne should have known better. A Holmes never did things by halves. Overachieving bastards. She brought a shaking hand to her mouth and distantly registered that Anthea was next to her offering her a handkerchief which she gladly accepted.

"Dr. Watson, are you ill? Are you hurt? Do you need an ambulance?" The woman's face was pale, probably just as pale as Joanne knew hers was.

She shook her head and let her guide her to the waiting town car. She made to turn back but the woman was persistent in getting her into the car. "My bag. I left it upstairs."

Anthea nodded and left, returning moments later with it and an envelope. She knew that it contained images of the scan. The shock was rapidly wearing off to be replaced with anger. Trust Mycroft to never do things halfway. She was going to castrate the man.

"Where is he?"

Mycroft Holmes shook as another chill took over. He'd already thrown up several times and he felt bloody awful. He hadn't been sick in years. His head pounded as he tried to review the reports and his vision blurred making it impossible to read the paper. He'd tried ignoring it but had been forced to accept being ill when he'd lost his tea last night. He still needed to work through it. There was no room for weakness in his position.

Looking up at the clock, Mycroft felt guilt. Dr. Watson's appointment should be finishing about now. He had wished to be there and to see the proof of their child but he couldn't risk her getting ill so he had stayed away. She had yet to gain back the weight from early on in the pregnancy.

He had texted her to apologize citing an important meeting as the reason for his absence but had become concerned when she hadn't replied and sent his assistant to check on her. The reports on her whereabouts and well-being had been informative but didn't give him any new information for the past hour.

He couldn't stop the shiver that caused his joints to ache and he put his head in his hands, struggling with the headache that was accompanying his other miseries.

He was trying to pull himself together to work when his door slammed open, rattling the hinges. Looking up, he expected Sherlock to be the cause of the dramatic entrance but was surprised when he saw a red-faced and very intimidating Watson at the door with rumpled clothes. There was a hint of gel on the edge of her knit shirt and a flustered PA behind her.

He started to reply when he felt the now-familiar feeling of nausea and bent over his dust bin, only bringing up water as he dry-heaved painfully.

Joanne's anger faded to be immediately replaced with worry. The sudden change was not surprising. Mycroft knew she was very adaptable. "Oh, my god! Mycroft, what the bloody hell are you doing at work?" Cool hands brushed against his forehead and he couldn't help leaning into the touch.
"You're burning up." Grabbing his wrist, the blond took his pulse, practically scowling as she timed him. He swallowed hard against being sick again and straightened, glaring at Anthea.

"She is not supposed to be here. You were ordered to check in on her and take her home." To his surprise, the brunette didn't look afraid of him, she looked more afraid of the small woman taking his pulse which was preposterous. In fact, he believed this was the first time he'd seen her not looking at her phone for longer than five minutes.

"You know, Mycroft, that tone of voice might be more convincing if it wasn't so hoarse from vomiting." She took a piece of paper and a pen from his desk and started writing.

"Is there anything critical today or tomorrow?" Joanne asked his PA and, to his indignation, she answered.

"No, ma'am. I can clear his schedule."

"Here. Go get this stuff and get a car to meet us. I'm taking Mr. Holmes home where he is going to go to bed." She handed the list to Anthea. Mycroft couldn't talk, so focused on fighting on not being sick again. He distantly registered that they were talking about him as if he was a child rather than to him.

Joanne knelt in front of him and peered at his face, brushing her fingers around his neck to feel his glands and he brushed her off. "You need to go home. I can't have you getting ill, especially in your condition."

"Sod my condition!" Standing up, the blond glared at him and started to pull him up with firm but gentle hands. "You are being ridiculous coming to work in this state. You are the one going home."

She manhandled him out of his office and into his car. He closed his eyes and clamped his lips shut to combat the nausea during the ride. He despised weakness.

They arrived at his house and she carefully guided him up the steps, giving him concerned glances frequently. An agent stood at his door with a large bag and her own rucksack that she took and he jumped as she rummaged in his trouser pocket for his keys.

"Come on. Let's get you into bed." She continued to assist him and he couldn't help it as he leaned on her, letting her help him up the stairs.

"I'm fine." He protested but she just continued to half carry him up the stairs to his room.

She scoffed and sat him on his bed, rummaging through his drawers and finding a pair of pajama bottoms. He drew the line at her dressing him and shook her off.

While he struggled with the clothing, Watson set about going through the bag.

"I wish your brother was this compliant when he gets ill. He believes his body is transport and that he can will it away. Stubborn bastard." Joanne wasn't looking at him as she started to unfold an IV pole and attached a bag to it. He blanched further as he saw the needle.

"Is this truly necessary?" He panted, exhausted and just wanting to sleep.

"Yes. It wouldn't have been had you stayed home and seen a doctor. You're dehydrated and your heart rate is far too high." Glancing at him she took his arm and applied the tourniquet. He started to pull away and she stopped.
"Are-are you afraid of needles?" Mycroft groaned in response and Joanne's eyes lit up in amusement. "The British government is afraid of needles. I never thought I'd see the day that Mycroft Holmes was scared of anything." She patted his arm and smirked. "I promise I won't hurt you although, you do deserve it considering how foolish you were going in like this."

"I do find you rather intimidating at times, Dr. Watson. Rather more than the idea of needles." He looked down when he felt tape being applied to secure the IV line on the top of his hand and was surprised. He hadn't even felt it.

"See? Told you." She set about pulling his blankets back and tucking him in before going back to the back and pulling out syringes and ampoules. "Your secret's safe with me." She started to inject the medication into the port. "Alright, now I'm going to give you a few things to help you. Some zofran to help with the nausea, a small dose of pain medication along with an anti-pyretic and the IV should stabilize your electrolyte balance."

He didn't have a chance to protest as she quickly finished pushing the medicine in and he suddenly felt a lot better. In fact, he felt fantastic. He blinked at her confused, the lights behind her twinkling in a friendly way and making her hair sparkle. Looking at his doctor, he smiled ridiculously wide.

Joanne set about taking his vitals and he noticed just how blond her hair was as it brushed against his face when she checked his lungs with the stethoscope. It was almost like the flowers behind the summer cottage his parents owned. He'd never noticed it before and he reached up a hand to touch it, wondering if it was as soft as it looked but she turned away before he could reach her to collect a small flashlight. Her eyes were a beautiful blue like a clear summer's day as she checked his eyes and throat and her smile...it was enchanting. She left and Mycroft sighed as he laid back, his pillow was so soft.

"Wow. You are a lightweight." She huffed a laugh. "I only gave you a quarter dose that I would give a child. You must have been sicker than I thought."

He moaned as she placed a cool washcloth on his forehead, pulled up his blankets and tucked him in. His eyes closed and the tension bled away as the medication took effect. He felt the bed dip as she settled next to him above the covers. This was nice. He liked her being next to him.

"Uh, thank you?" Had he said that out loud? Her gentle laugh made him feel warm and he drifted asleep, finally feeling relief.

xXxpagebreakxXx

Mycroft woke, finding himself feeling much better. His head no longer hurt and he actually felt hungry. His nausea was almost gone. He heard soft breathing next to him. He looked over and remembered. Joanne had taken him home.

He looked around, spying the IV pole with a fresh bag, halfway through, and he remembered her caring for him. Berating him at the same time but her touches had been gentle.

He turned on his side and spied the doctor leaning back against the headboard with her legs crossed in front of her, her chin drooping on her chest as she slept. She had patient charts on her lap and her biro in a loose grip with her medical bag between them. She looked exhausted.

Her hair was half out of the loose twist from earlier and blond wisps fell around her face as she slept. He noticed she wasn't wearing the shirt that she had had on when she had abducted him from his office. Instead, she had on one of his blue button-downs. It was far too big, the sleeves rolled up to compensate for her shorter arms and he liked how it looked on her for some reason. It looked better
She mumbled and slid down on the bed to lie down fully, her papers falling and she faced him still as asleep, her mouth slightly open as she breathed. A strand fell over her face, hiding her from him and he reached out to brush it away but stopped, his hand hovering. He didn't want to risk waking her.

Glancing at the clock, he saw it was almost eight in the morning. Had she slept at all? She shouldn't be doing this. She was the one who needed to rest. He was supposed to be the one caring for her, not the other way around. What if she got what he had? Would it put her at risk? As it was, he could see that she had been asleep maybe an hour. The previous night she had only rested for four plagued by nightmares.

He scowled at the fact that she was risking her health and that his assistant had betrayed him to her. Joanne shivered and rolled onto her back, the button-down riding up and that was when Mycroft saw it, the swell of her abdomen. She typically hid it under her clothes, almost as if by hiding it she could deny it. This was the first time it was obvious what it was. The last time he had seen it, it had only resembled a little extra weight but now, it showed.

He looked her over and, even though she was clearly exhausted, she seemed to glow. He hadn't had much faith in the myth of women glowing when they were expecting but he was glad to be proven wrong because Dr. Watson? She glowed.

He shook his head to clear it. It had to be the medication and illness making him feel these things. It had to be responsible for the warm feeling in his chest at the sight of her sleeping next to him.

He watched her, taking in the sight of her and relaxing for the first time in the past day. Whatever she had done, it had helped immensely. He was no longer sticky with sweat and he saw the basin with the wash cloth next to him. Had she cleaned him? His face felt hot as the thought of her caring for him was embarrassing.

Joanne's breathing changed and her eyelids fluttered, opening to reveal those blue eyes. "You're awake." She pushed herself up and cleared away the mess of charts, viewing him with a clinical eye. "How are you feeling?"

"I'm fine. Better now."

She scoffed and started to take his blood pressure. "I'll be the judge of that."

Mycroft waited patiently as she examined him. She really was efficient. She was wasted working at that lowly surgery. He gestured to the shirt. "Why-?"

Joanne blushed. "Sorry. You threw up on my top and I didn't have a spare. I'll return it when mine's finished in the washer." She finished his exam, gently palpating his abdomen.

"Well, you seem a bit better now that you've gotten fluids. You've just got a bit of a stomach bug that's been going around." She pointed at his left arm and he saw a plaster. "I checked your white count and a few other things while you were asleep and confirmed it. Do you think you can manage some toast and juice?"

He nodded and she left. He didn't like how tired she looked. She was quick to return and she placed a tray of food in front of him, watching expectantly as he ate. He suspected his brother had instilled that behavior in her.

He suddenly remembered her appointment. She had been angry when she had come in but why? He didn't think it had been because he had missed it. She was independent and would have understood
him being occupied elsewhere.

"How did the appointment with Dr. Thomlinson go?"

Her expression shuttered and his heart sped up in worry. Was there something wrong with the baby? Something wasn't adding up and he cursed being sick. His thoughts were far too slow.

"It was...interesting. I borrowed a doppler so you can hear if you'd like since you missed the ultrasound. It's not the same but..." Joanne rummaged through her bag and laid back in her spot on the bed next to him, squirting a small amount of gel on her belly and she pressed a small wand on herself. He heard a gentle whoosh whoosh.

"That's me. Hang on a mo." She moved the device slightly and he heard it, a much faster beat. It was amazing. He smiled as she played the sound. It felt real, the proof of the life that was growing inside.

"This is the baby's heartbeat. A healthy 147 beats per minute." She moved the device slightly to her right and he heard the beat again.

"And this is the other baby's heartbeat."

Wait...what?

"I beg your pardon?" His mind stuttered. There were two! Now it made sense why she had come barging into his office. Did she blame him? Was she truly angry or was it fear? He had yet to see her back down from a challenge but he knew she could handle it.

"Yeah. Two. Clearly you weren't as infertile as you thought." She scowled at him but Mycroft didn't care. He had been hoping for just a single child and, here she was, giving him two. Joanne Watson was constantly surprising him. He felt pride and awe at the knowledge that he was going to be a father to two.

"You're lucky you're poorly otherwise I'd have punched you." There was little heat in her words. Clearly, being sick had it's advantages.

"Twins?"

She rolled her eyes and shrugged, a smile hinting at her lips. "Yeah. Twins." Laughing, the blond put away the device and wiped herself down. "You Holmases are going to be the death of me." She sighed and looked away, her eyes distant as she thought. At least she seemed to have forgiven him.

She shifted and reached into her pocket. "Anthea brought the pictures. I kind of left a bit quick after and forgot them."

He took the offered envelope and opened it. The grainy image made little sense but with Watson's help, he could make out his children. He saw four arms and four legs, two little heads and two little bodies. He wondered if her could get her to agree to a more detailed scan the next time. He wanted to know more about these two little beings.

"Mycroft, I'm not sure I can do this. Everything's doubled now."

He gripped her hand, giving it a squeeze. "I rather think you'll be able to handle two Holmases."

She gave him a warm look and returned the gesture, the warm feeling increasing in his chest. "Who said they were going to be Holmases. There's nothing wrong with being a Watson."
A shrill ringing interrupted them and Joanne let go, his hand suddenly feeling cold at her absence. He distracted himself by finishing his toast as she answered her mobile to try and give her some measure of privacy.

"Hi Patrick! No, I'm at a friend's."

And, just like that, all the warmth he had been feeling evaporated.

Joanne turned back to him. "No. I've got a half-shift at the surgery at noon but I'll need to come back and check on my friend. I have to cancel tonight. I'm sorry."

Mycroft was conflicted. On the one hand he preferred that she was placing him over the accountant but, on the other hand, wasn't she giving him enough? Her friendship? Children? He didn't have friends but, like his brother, he counted Watson as one.

"You can go."

Joanne's eyes flicked up to his and he could read her indecision. She truly was awful at hiding her emotions but that wasn't a failure. In fact, it was one of her better attributes.

She held the phone loose in her hand as she tried to read him better, still unsure. "Uh..."

He pulled himself back and reigned his feelings in, no longer smiling and no longer allowing this weakness. Joanne must have seen the change because she turned away from him.

"Yeah, Patrick. I guess-I guess I'm ok for tonight." She threw a final curious glance over her shoulder at him. "I'll- I'll see you at eight."
Chapter Nine

Sherlock lay back, contemplating his latest problem. Over the last several weeks, he had began to notice his brother's growing interest in his flat mate/friend but it had been a slow and cautious thing. Normally, in life, Mycroft Holmes was never slow or cautious unless it was in work but, even then, every possibility was considered and accounted for and it was a sure plan. This was...different. It was closer behavior to when they were children. Mycroft would hold himself back, usually when he was afraid—yes, as tedious as it was to think it, he was afraid—of getting hurt or rejected.

It had been when he had started at secondary school, Mycroft was in his final year in sixth form, and the school had decided to hold a formal dance. Sherlock had had no interest in such things, his focus now firmly centered on science but Mycroft, his attentions had drifted from his schoolwork and onto a girl in his year, Meredith.

She was everything they, as Holmes, were not. Social, popular, and a bright light that brought attention anywhere she went. She was nowhere near their intelligence but she had a gift for making anyone who was the object of her favor a powerful person. Her connections through familial links and her skills put anyone who was associated with her would lift them up. But, as Sherlock had also seen, she had a singular skill for destroying those she did not like and Mycroft was one she did not.

Mycroft had been young, foolish even. He was ambitious, even at a young age, but he had been weak. His focus had been limited to just the allure of the young woman not the potential benefits or dangers of her but just to her. Unlike most of her previous 'boyfriends' Mycroft, for once in his dull life, had been interested in her. Sherlock had seen the way he'd looked at her, the way his eyes had followed her, his inability to focus on his class work, the way he'd flush bright red (almost the color of his hair) when she'd walk past. He'd even had the misfortune of walking in on him practicing asking her on a date in front of a mirror. It had been mortifying for both parties involved.

Meredith had been the one to start his change into the iceman he was today. Sherlock had had front row seats to the fallout. It had been the day before the dance and Mycroft, a lovesick, pimply, teenager, had approached Meredith in the lunch hall. He had made the mistake of not speaking to her in private. He had seen the devastated and humiliated look on his face as Meredith and her group of friends had laughed and mocked him. Even Sherlock had felt horror at the sight of his brother's crushed face.

Meredith had practically made Mycroft into running joke at the school. His previous contacts for his future had dried up and he had been forced to restructure his entire education to avoid those who were associated with Meredith's family and friends. He had been seen as weak and Mycroft was
determined to end that false perception. It took more effort but he eventually got back on track. Although, the embarrassingly pornographic video of Meredith and a university professor of Sherlock's that went mysteriously public did lower her influence and her family's position in politics. Sherlock had never liked that professor anyway.

How Mycroft had looked at Meredith when he was younger was much like how he was looking at Joanne now. His focus on her had been more than just idle curiosity from the moment he had met her. Sherlock had realized that when Mycroft had taken such a keen interest in the doctor. None of his previous associates had caused this reaction in the elder Holmes before. Mycroft would never have asked for advice from those he considered beneath him nor would he have ever gone out of his way to have 'meetings' despite the knowledge that she likely wouldn't be able to solve the cases he sent their way. He would have simply bypassed her and contacted him for the answers he sought.

There were further signs of his brother's infatuation. If he had simply wanted to 'further his genes' then he would never have started to attend, what was likely, her boring medical appointments. He would have simply accessed the medical records as his attendance made no impact on the fetus's health. Then there was the marked increase in her protection. Since their new association had begun, Mycroft had steadily been increasing his laser focus on them which had made his ability to do the work difficult at best, impossible at worst.

Despite his brother's interference, there was one thing that was worse. Watson's current boyfriend. Percy? Paul? He shook his head in annoyance. The name wasn't important. What was important was how irritating the man was. How dull. The man was a distraction and wanted to pull Joanne away from their way of life. He was trying to shape Watson into who he wanted, stifling her and, by association, him. He didn't understand why she was still dating this amoeba.

The man was vain. He had no real ambition apart from securing a wife and having that wife cater to his whims believing himself to be superior by the fact that he was a man. Perhaps Joanne felt that she needed stability now that she was gestating? She hadn't even told Peter? Percy? about the baby, likely out of fear. It would make far more sense for her to end it now. That man had no respect for strong women if his internet habits were anything to go by despite the fact that he was far from strong himself.

The idea of Watson with his brother repulsed him but the idea of her with Peter-Well-whatever his name was-it was an abhorrent thought of Joanne staying with him and Mycroft was the lesser of two evils. It was likely to fail soon anyway and it was a waste of time to draw it out.

He needed more data. Standing, Sherlock grabbed his coat. He needed to observe Joanne. She hadn't been in since yesterday which was when her obstetrics appointment was. Despite evidence to the contrary, he did keep track of some of the more mundane things. It was less tedious when it had to do with Joanne Watson, though.

He pulled out his mobile, quickly typing in the program to track Watson's phone. There were some advantages to having Mycroft as a brother. The app showed her at Mycroft's home. Well...that was unusual.

He hailed a cab and watched the app but Joanne stayed at Mycroft's. He got out a street over to prevent being seen and was rewarded when he spied Joanne leaving Mycroft's, unseen. Really, she should be more observant of her surroundings. It was a miracle she survived to adulthood much less her time associated with him or his brother.

He looked closer, curious to see why she had been with Mycroft. She was wearing her jacket and trousers but she was also wearing a shirt of Mycroft's and taking a bag of rubbish to the bin. He could see that her hair was down, likely because she didn't have a brush to help putting it back in it's
usual ponytail. Even though she was dressed in Mycroft's shirt it was wrinkled showing she had slept in it, not pressed as if she'd pulled it on it the morning. Either Mycroft had an unusual fetish of her wearing his clothes or, more likely, she had simply slept in it because her own clothing had become damaged or dirty. Her face was pale and there were dark circles underneath showing that, what little sleep she did have it was far from enough.

He waited until she had turned the corner to get a bus and made his way to his brother's. Sherlock lifted the bin lid and spotted IV bags, her shirt stained from vomit, a large amount of paper towels and used cleaning supplies. So...Mycroft was sick enough that his self-sacrificing flat mate stayed to care for him.

What was unusual was that his brother who lived and breathed his work had allowed it. Although...Joanne was a stubbornly persistent doctor and ridiculously loyal friend despite their attempts to curb this behavior. As if they could really defend themselves against her when she had her mind set. Sherlock could take down ruthless killers and Mycroft could incite civil wars but, against Joanne Watson...they stood no chance.

Sherlock moved quickly, silently slinking through the house to where his brother's room was and he was surprised. It was one of the few times Mycroft did not have papers surrounding him or a computer/laptop in front of him. He looked...sad. He was looking at a small piece of paper. Sherlock watched as Mycroft sighed, shook his head and stuffed the paper in an envelope, carefully placing it in his nightstand.

Sentiment? Definitely.

"Brother mine, if you are going to continue in your juvenile attempts to spy on me at least do me the courtesy of doing so successfully."

Sherlock bristled at the accusation and walked in. "I suspect that I am more successful than you due to your habit of leaving crumb trails from your sweets."

Mycroft glared at him but it lacked his usual fire. He took advantage and settled himself in the armchair next to the fireplace. "I am here to ask though, if you are appropriating my friend for the night to let me know."

An eye twitch.

"After all, I do know she is in high demand considering she has her date tonight." Sherlock said carefully as he watched his brother. Mycroft must either be extremely ill or he cared for Joanne more than Sherlock had predicted. Sherlock could read him far more easily than usual and he saw Mycroft's jaw clench and his right hand clenching into a fist, likely wanting to sink it into Watson's current paramour.

He pulled on a smug smile, knowing that it would irritate Mycroft to no end. "Is there something you wish to say on the matter of Dr. Watson and her dating?"

"Don't be smart, Sherlock!" He snapped.

"Oh, that takes me back. 'Don't be smart, Sherlock. I'm the smart one.'." Sherlock mocked and it riled Mycroft up further.

"I am the smart one." He growled.

Sherlock arched a brow indicating his thought on Mycroft's claim. "Oh, really?"
Mycroft composed himself enough to smile. "Both of us thought you were the idiot." Sherlock's eyes narrowed at him as he continued. "We had nothing else to go on until we met other children."

Just why was he helping him again? "Well, that was a mistake, Mycroft."

Mycroft chuckled and shifted in bed. "Ghastly. What were our parents thinking of?"

Shrugging, Sherlock picked up a small trinket off the end table. "Probably some thing about us making friends."

"Oh, yes. 'Friends'. You do go in for that sort of thing now."

Sherlock placed the small trinket down, making sure to place it off-center to piss Mycroft off. "And you don't? Ever?" He eyed him, making sure to read him closely. And there it was, the hint of sadness in his gray eyes, the loneliness that Mycroft sought to hide beneath a false veneer of disdain.

"If you seem slow to me, Sherlock, can you imagine what real people are like? I'm living in a world of goldfish." Mycroft sniffed and looked away.

Sherlock very well knew he considered Watson a friend despite keeping himself distanced. What he needed to see was evidence of him thinking of her as more. "Oh, well, I don't know. Perhaps, I'd thought you'd found yourself a goldfish."

Mycroft's eyes narrowed. "Change the subject, now."

Sherlock's smile grew into a knowing smirk. Perhaps this was his gift as much as his skill of deduction. Being able to spar with his brother on an even ground was something few could do. "Perhaps she's not so much a goldfish as you may think. After all, she can handle a Holmes."

"You know very well that to associate with me could destroy her."

Sherlock snorted and rolled his eyes. "I think you should stop hiding and at least try."

"She is currently in a relationship and she appears happy. I will not interfere any more with her life than I already have." Mycroft pursed his lips as if he'd tasted something bitter.

Time to place the final piece in his attack. "Well, if you think that then you are clearly not the smart one in the family." Shrugging, Sherlock watched him from the corner of his eye. "Unless you truly want your offspring to be raised by that fool she is associating with."

Mycroft snarled and Sherlock knew his work here was finished. He left quickly, knowing that he was successful on one front. He just needed to do a few more things before tonight.

xXx

Sherlock cracked an eye open as she came in the door. There had to have been something different about this appointment. He eyed his friend as she hung up her jacket, her shirt sliding up enough to show the, now round, baby bump. He was surprised that people didn't notice it but, then again, people never observe properly.

He watched as she looked around the flat, her nose wrinkling. "Have you been on the settee all day?" Joanne sniffed, her eyes darting around and settling in the kitchen.

"Is that my dress!?!" Running over, Watson gaped at the destroyed garment. She was so focused on the burned, cut up, stained fabric that she missed Sherlock's small smile.
"Experiment."

"Oh, my god! It's ruined!" Spinning on her heels, she stomped over and Sherlock had a moment of fear for his life. Jo's eyes were flashing dangerously and her fists were clenched.

"That was the one dress I had left that fit, you git!" She let out a breath, running her hands through her hair and pulling on it slightly. "I'm going to have to go shopping."

That had been what he had been hoping for. He knew that that was the last 'date dress'. He calculated that she would likely have to go to the closest Marks and Spencer's, then on to several other clothing shops. He expected her back in two hours, three if she was taking the tube which was almost guaranteed. Enough time to meet her date for a small time.

"If this date goes wrong, I'm gonna come looking for you so you'd better watch out because I'm short and my hits tend to go low." Her eyes darted downwards and he cringed very obviously for effect, knowing that she was waiting for it. Oh, she'd never hurt him but she'd be pretty tetchy for a few days.

The moment Watson left Sherlock went to work setting up the screen with different wall textures for his blood spatter test to see the differences between weapons and what it'd look like on different surfaces when bludgeoning certain body parts. This was one that even Joanne had shown interest in so it was killing two birds with one stone.

He had gotten halfway through his tools (knives, shovels, rounders bats, chair legs, etc.) when he heard footsteps on the stairs (too heavy for Joanne and too quick for Mrs. Hudson).

He knew that he was successful when Joanne's date had stopped walking and started to move away from the blood covered consulting detective. He removed his face shield with his largest smile and placed an head in a jar of sulphuric acid to ensure he could see what the bones would look like post trauma.

The man was positively green as Sherlock started cutting into the scalp of his next skull, carefully ensuring that everything was within his "guest's" field of vision.

He swallowed loudly and looked around the flat, as if Joanna would appear out of thin air. "Where's Joanne?"

"She's just gone down to the shops. She'll be back soon, Phillip."

"Patrick."

"Who?"

"My name is Patrick." He growled.

"Boring."

The man's eyes drifted warily to the mess in the kitchen and back to Sherlock who pulled out his next head. He'd specifically saved this one for this moment. The passing resemblance to Watson's "boyfriend" was uncanny. There were even the hair transplant scars on the scalp. He still couldn't believe that she would date someone who practiced crop rotation on his scalp.

He reached out a gore-covered hand. "Pass me the cleaver."

The man backed up, his back hitting the wall and face draining of color. "You're a bloody
psychopath!"

Sherlock looked up and smiled. "High functioning sociopath who's friend you are currently dating."

The door suddenly opened and Joanne took in the scene, her eyes widening in shock before she covered her face with her hands and shaking but, looking closer, Sherlock could see she was hiding her laughter. Well, that went better than was expected.

xXxI love the idea of Sherlock playing matchmaker and I hope I got Sherlock's character right?xXx

Joanne forced a smile as Patrick talked about his day at work. She was very nervous about telling him about the pregnancy not knowing how he'd react. He'd noticed she'd gotten a little rounder around the middle but hadn't really forced the issue apart from a comment here and there. She was pretty much out of time and needed to tell him soon. She'd been hoping to tell him at the flat but Sherlock had pretty much killed that possibility so she settling for going to his place.

It had actually been pretty funny watching Patrick turn green at Sherlock's antics. Jo had been surprised that it had taken him this long to "break in" her date. She had to give Patrick some credit. He hadn't run away...yet.

She sipped at her sparkling water and tugged slightly on the bottom of the blouse in a nervous tic she'd been doing lately with all of her clothes. At the end of their date she was going back to his place and she'd tell him then. Patrick was a nice bloke. Polite, normal...boring. But wasn't boring a good thing sometimes?

Things hadn't progressed far between them but it was more on her part than his. He seemed like an alright guy, if a bit vain. She just couldn't shake the feeling of wrong. Then there was the fact that she knew, despite Mycroft's assurances of her privacy remaining in tact, he had to be watching her or having her watched and it almost felt like a betrayal to Mycroft if she went further with Patrick for some reason.

To top it all off, there was the issue of mixed signals last night. It had weighed heavily on her mind today, keeping her more alert than usual despite her fatigue as she mulled it over. Mycroft had been practically affectionate, especially in his sleep. It had taken a lot of willpower to not record it on her camera phone as he had turned into an octopus and latched onto her in the night. She hadn't been able to move for hours. Every time she had tried to, he just held on tighter and nuzzled her bump, almost as if she was his teddy bear.

Shaking her head, Jo decided to put it off as side effects from the medication and fever-like behavior. She'd had patients before act similar when they were as ill as the elder Holmes was. Although, he had seemed...different this morning and he had been clear-headed. His emotions seemed closer to the surface and he had almost been happy. It had disappeared quickly once he woke up all the way though. It had to have been a fluke...but it had been a nice fluke.

Patrick paid despite Jo's protests and they started the walk to his nearby flat. They'd gotten about halfway there when they passed an alley and a gangly, filthy, teenager in a hoodie with a small pocket-knife jumped out. He looked sickly but dangerous if that glint in his eyes was anything to go by.

"Give me your wallet and handbag!"

Jo barely had a moment to take stock of the situation before she felt a hard shove from her right that forced her mostly into the alley and closer to the mugger. Jo turned around to see Patrick fleeing.
"SERIOUSLY!?!" Watson shouted at his back. "Wanker!"

"Oi! Give me your handbag! I'll cut you!"

Joanne Watson drew herself up, feeling the familiar euphoria of adrenalin flooding her, sharpening her senses, and slowly turned towards the young man holding the knife. Of all the people he could have mugged it had to have been her. She widened her stance, wondering if it'd be her or one of Mycroft's minions that'd take him down.

She looked distinctly unimpressed at him and the hand holding the knife shook. "No, you're not." She told him in a calm voice but she still kept her stance light to be ready if he did try anything. She couldn't risk turning her back on him and running herself. He was too unpredictable and clearly desperate.

"Yes, I am!" He stepped forward but Watson could see that he was nervous. This was probably his first time and he was definitely in withdrawal. He was definitely confused by her calm refusal if the shaking was anything to go by. "Give me the bag, now!"

Lunging forward the mugger attempted to slash her while she side-stepped and hit his wrist, knocking the knife out of his grip. Watson used his momentum against him and pushed at the wall and pulling him back as he fought, slamming him to the ground. She spun around and kicked him in between his shoulder blades as he tried to get up and immediately followed with her knee in the middle of his back to pin him and twisted his arm up behind him.

"Oh, God! You're breaking my arm!"

Rolling her eyes, Jo reached over and grabbed her, now broken, purse strap and started tying his wrists behind him. "It's not broken, it's just sprained."

Once he was secured, she hauled him up into a sitting position, looking him over. A bruise was gonna form on his cheekbone and he had some scratches but he wasn't hurt too bad.

"It 'urts! I know it's broken!" He protested.

"I'm a doctor, it's not broken." She argued back as she stood and walked over to her purse to get her mobile to call the police to pick up her would-be mugger.

"Oh, god! You're 'urt! Are you alright?" He gasped, his eyes on her.

She was in the middle of dialing 999 when his words registered and Jo looked down, seeing blood on her left side. "What?" Lifting up her top, she could see a good size cut, not too deep but enough to look frightening for someone who wasn't medically trained by the amount of blood. She'd probably need a few small stitches but she could handle it at home. She really didn't want this much fuss. Her jacket was also a casualty.

"And you're preggers! I only meant to scare you!"

"I'm fine." She snapped. Tonight was not her night.

She pressed a hand to her side as pounding footsteps came up behind her.

"Agent Riley, MI-5, Doctor Watson. An ambulance is on the way and so are local law enforcement. DI Lestrade heard what was going on and is on his way, too."

She was gonna kill Patrick! Adrenalin fading, the sting of the cut started bugging her. She still
couldn't believe the wanker shoved her forward as a distraction for him to get away. Bastard.

" 'old up! You've got spooks following you?"

Jo gave the mugger a an irritated glance. The young man's eyes widened in terror as Riley placed cuffs on him and secured him. Panda cars and an ambulance pulled up with their lights flashing, quickly taking custody of her attacker and Watson was herded to the ambulance.

Fortunately, it was a crew that her and Sherlock were well acquainted with. The agent held her arm as if she would suddenly faint and guided her to the waiting ambulance.

"I am so sorry, Doctor. I couldn't see what was happening. I knew something was wrong when Mr. Goodall ran out alone without you. Mr. Holmes...oh, God!" He ran a hand through his hair and his face was white in fear. What exactly did Mycroft get up to to cause this much fear in an agent? She almost didn't want to know.

Joanne gave him, what was hopefully, a reassuring smile. "I'm fine, Agent Riley. It's just a scratch. I don't even need to go in to hospital."

Keeley and John didn't even bat an eye at her as she pulled up her shirt to expose her wound and abdomen for them to look and help her bandage everything, carefully applying the steri-strips to pull the cut closed.

"Ma'am, I must insist! I'm charged with your well-being and-" Riley argued.

"Tell Mycroft I told you to sod off. I will bloody well go home and try to salvage the rest of my night by having a pint of ice cream and fantasizing punching my ex-boyfriend." She hissed through gritted teeth when the sting of the antiseptic burned her.

John had finished applying the bandage when things got worse.

"You're pregnant?" Lestrade's voice caught her attention. He sounded like he'd been punched.

She almost wondered if she should just hand out a flyer.

Greg was stood next to Agent Riley, mouth open and gaping.

She jerked down her new shirt and sighed. "Yeah, Greg."

He looked hurt that she hadn't told him and very worried.

"Why didn't you tell me?" He asked quietly and Jo felt bad for keeping it from him but she wasn't sure how to tell anyone. Would Mycroft even be comfortable with being known as the father?

"It's complicated."

His face screwed up in confusion and Jo knew exactly what he was going to ask next. Sherlock would be proud at her deduction.

Greg hesitated a minute before asking. "Is it Sherlock's?"

"Oh, my god! No! No, it is not Sherlock's!"
Chapter Notes

Omg! Over 300 kudos! I am really honored!

I only hope this chapter is worthy. I'm nervous about it and hope it's good enough? Yes, I always look for validation and every time I get an email telling me about a kudos or a review it makes me so happy!

Things have been a little hard this past month so that's why I've been slow at updating. I lost my daughter's federal court case which was to force our school district to provide a school nurse so she can safely attend every day. It was devastating and cost us a lot in legal fees so I've been stressed as a result.

I hope you guys like this chapter and I would LOVE ideas if where to go next! So please give me some plot bunnies!
Natasha

Chapter Ten

"It's not Sherlock's?" Greg asked quietly.

He was driving her home in his car after she'd shaken off Riley. The silence for most of the ride had been uncomfortable to say the least.

"No. It's not Sherlock's." She answered quietly and leaned her head against the doorframe and closed her eyes.

A pause. "Cause it'd be alright if it was. No judgement."

"We aren't together. We're just flatmates."

Greg shrugged, looking sympathetic. "I'm just saying you can tell me the truth. I'll support you."

Jo rolled her eyes. "Alright. I guess I can tell you. It is his. We had a passionate night of lovemaking during the Guthright case. It was everything I'd ever hoped for and more. Sherlock's deductive skills made him the best lover I have ever been with." She told him in a deadpan voice.

Greg's hands slipped on the steering wheel and the car jerked. "What?"

Smiling, Watson turned her head towards him. "No, Greg. It is not Sherlock's. We're just friends."

Lestrade winced. "Sorry. It's just you're always together. I naturally assumed-" He waved a hand vaguely.

Jo smiled but Lestrade was watching the road and not her. "That I've got carpal tunnel?"

Laughing, Greg pulled up across the road from 221. "Now you're just taking the piss."

Warmth bloomed in her chest at Greg's care and nosiness. He was easygoing but cared, not only about her but Sherlock as well. He was one of Jo's best allies when dealing with the chaos that was
her best mate. Not only did he care but he respected her.

His eyes drifted away and over her shoulder to the front of 221b. "Now who could that be?"

Watson turned in her seat and groaned. "I don't believe it."

Outside, she spotted an annoyingly familiar black car. "It's Sherlock's brother." A fluttering of the curtains and she knew she'd been spotted and escape wasn't an option.

Greg frowned, looking thoughtful. "Isn't he that posh bloke with the umbrella?"

"Yes."

"Yes." She slunk down in her seat, knowing that she'd have to go up eventually.

Whistling, her friend looked at her sympathetically. "Dealing with two Holmeses is a fate I wouldn't wish on anyone."

Jo snorted. "Don't I know it." She mumbled.

Sighing, the blonde grasped the door handle but looked back at Greg desperately. Well, maybe only a little desperately. "Don't you have a case on? He definitely needs to get out more. He actually was bludgeoning body parts when I left." She knew she was going to have to face them sooner or later. She'd been hoping for later to give herself time to collect herself from the wreck that had been her date.

A squeeze to her shoulder in support and she drew herself up, ready to face the wrath of the, suddenly protective consulting detective and his overbearing, possibly omnipotent, brother. The father of her children. She almost pitied them. They stood no chance growing up to get away with anything under Mycroft's watchful eye; not to mention Sherlock's. Although, he might help them in their future endeavors just to get one over on the elder Holmes.

"You look like you're going to war."

Stepping out of the car, Jo turned around, serious and resigned. "Aren't I?"

Opening the door to 221b, Jo almost considered legging it but she knew that Mycroft probably had an agent ready to drag her back. She'd really only wanted to quickly clean up and watch some mind-numbing telly and go to bed.

Mycroft was sat in Sherlock's leather chair while Sherlock was pacing. The two were complete opposites in their behaviors but it was still concerning. Mycroft was eerily still, his face blank but his eyes like ice. Sherlock, on the other hand, was a veritable whirlwind of chaotic energy. His hair was wild as he moved across the sitting room, face flushed and hands clenching and unclenching. For how observant the Holmeses usually were, it was telling that they hadn't even noticed that she'd stepped into the flat.

She idly wondered if she could manage to traverse the flat to get to her room before being spotted. Before she could finish the thought, Sherlock was on her, gripping her biceps and looking her over with disturbing intensity, focusing on her side and lifting her button-down, dodging her attempts to protect her modesty and muttering deductions at a rapid speed, too fast for her to keep up.

"...small pocket knife, inexperienced based on location...six inch cut, lower left abdomen, right-handed assault. Deep enough to cause enough blood loss to potentially create conditions for fainting, dizziness, nausea. Definitely requires stitches but didn't puncture beyond the fascia. Angle is wrong. Definitely an attacking slash but it's as if you leaned into the knife..." His face lit up in understanding. "Oh! Oh! It was when you disarmed him!" His features immediately darkened as he took in the state
of her jacket and he immediately pulled it off despite her protests. "Oi!"

Lifting up the right sleeve, he growled. "Bruise marks, upper arm. Shoved hard, enough force to hurt, but not by the attacker. Based on the angle and location of your wound it was towards your attacker as if Patrick used you to propel himself away and to use you as a distraction for his escape." She looked down to where he held her arm gently, a direct contrast to the harsh speech. She hadn't even realized she'd been hurt there.

Jo barely had a chance to remark on Sherlock getting Patrick's name right when he started pulling on his coat.

"Hey! Whoa! Where are you going?" Joanne grabbed his arm, effectively stopping Sherlock from leaving. "I'm fine!"

Sherlock's expression caused her to let go, afraid of him for the first time. He looked her over, his gaze stopping on her blood soaked top. "Clearly." He sneered, his voice thick with sarcasm.

He spun on his heel, flying down the stairs and slammed the front door hard enough for the windows to rattle.

Joanne turned to appeal to Mycroft who was watching silently, lips pressed into a thin white line. His body was tense, hands gripping the armrests with white knuckles. "You have to stop him!"

"Why ever would I do that?" His voice was calm, conversational, and if she was on the phone with him she'd never have known just how furious he was.

"Even you can't get him off a murder charge!" She tried.

Mycroft stayed silent and Joanne shivered, the hairs on the back of her neck rising at the implication.

"I'm not some damsel in distress needing you and Sherlock to ride in and save the day. I'm not really hurt."

"I beg to differ." He stood and pulled his suit jacket straight, stiffly holding out an arm to gesture for her to take a seat on the couch. "As will Dr. Thomlinson when he arrives to ensure your health and that of our children since you not only foolishly took a vagrant with a weapon by yourself but also decided against necessary medical intervention."

Joanne threw up her hands in frustration. "What was I supposed to do? Turn tail and run? He was a desperate teenager who was unpredictable. I can handle myself and I can easily treat myself with my kit in the bathroom."

Mycroft's face turned an alarming ruddy color. "That teenager-" He spat the word as if it was an insult. "-could have killed you. He could have killed our children and I know that would have killed you just as effectively. Had that knife been a few centimeters to the right and we might not be having this conversation." He moved closer, his entire being towering over her. "You should have moved away from him while keeping him in sight, waited for the back-up you knew was available. You should have gone straight to hospital because you. Were. Stabbed!"

She could feel her blood-pressure rising and the front of her shirt starting to get damp. The steristrips must have come loose from her movements. Jo knew she needed to tend to it but she didn't want to back down.

"I can out-stubborn even Sherlock Holmes when it comes to his well-being. I can certainly do so with you. So. Lie. Down. Now." Mycroft demanded obedience and Jo did not respond well to alpha
males.

"I can take care of myself." She bit out.

He was about to shout back but he stopped himself, deflating and that was when Joanne saw it. His hands shaking. He was scared.

He put his hands on her shoulders and closed his eyes, taking a deep breath and his eyes met hers begging her to concede. "Just because you can take care of yourself, it doesn't mean you should always have to. Please allow me this. Allow me to care for you." He whispered.

Joanne nodded and Mycroft breathed a sigh of relief. He gently pushed her to sit and then lie on the couch. She held still while he peeled up her shirt and started to unbutton it to expose the injury and she didn't say a word when he gasped at the sight of her blood.

He quickly retrieved the first-aid kit from the loo and Joanne let him tend to her without complaint, knowing that he needed this. He needed to assert control to calm himself. Watching him as he worked to clean the area and press a gauze pad to her she noticed his left hand held her rounded belly, a thumb gently stroking the skin. He looked so vulnerable in that moment like the mask he usually hid behind had cracked, showing the real Mycroft Holmes.

Reaching up with her left hand, she gently touched his face, stroking up to his auburn hair. He was still a little feverish from his stomach bug he was recovering from but, more likely, it was stress. "Hey, are you ok?"

He turned, surprised at her reciprocated concern and opened his mouth to reply when a sharp knock startled the moment causing the mask to heal itself for him to hide behind once again.

xXx

Mycroft watched as Thomlinson examined Joanne Watson, his anger mounting as each mark was revealed. Had it only been this morning that he had watched her as she had slept next to him, unmarked and at peace?

He cursed himself for allowing her to compromise her safety, hated himself for following her wishes, and refused to have this happen again. This incident was too close for comfort.

Mycroft couldn't help the small smile when Joanne criticized the stitch Thomplinson was applying to her cut and when she corrected him from an over and over interrupted to a subcutaneous continuous to minimize the possibility of a scar. She truly was an amazing doctor but the worst patient. He could see Thomlinson bristle under her instruction but he conceded when he looked back to Mycroft who nodded in agreement with Jo's suggestions.

The doctor palpitated her abdomen and found nothing concerning, reaffirmed both heartbeats, checked pulse and temperature. All within normal parameters but was slightly concerned about her blood pressure being slightly elevated. Joanne was not pleased when the doctor recommended/ordered a few days rest and for a nurse to come each day to do checks. He was surprised but pleased when she didn't object but she did make the doctor check him over as well which he tolerated to humor her.

After he left, Joanne padded upstairs to change and Mycroft set about making some tea (de-caff but she didn't need to know). He, for some reason, felt reluctance to leave despite the fact that he knew she was safe. His conversation with Sherlock played through his mind.

"Ooh, that is just what I needed."
He handed her a cup and she sat across him in pajamas, her hair loose around her shoulders and face free of her make-up and he couldn't help but think she looked beautiful without the trappings of female vanity. Perhaps his brother was more intelligent than he gave him credit for. He did care for her. Love her? He was somewhat out of his element in this.

"Please tell me you've intercepted Sherlock. I don't need him fighting for my honor." Her eyebrows drew down in worry. "Or going to jail for something that's not important. It's not worth it."

Mycroft did think it was worth it, that she was worth defending, but she did have a point. It was something that needed to be handled with more...finesse. The less she knew, the better. "I can assure you that Sherlock is being handled as we speak."

Jo snorted. "I'll bet he loved that."

"Mycroft, the agent you assigned to me?" She tapped her cup and, again, he struggled to remain calm and in control at the mere mention of him.

"Agent Riley."

"Hmm...right." She bit her lip, clearly considering her words. "Do I want to know why he's afraid of you considering you supposedly 'occupy a minor position'?"

"Probably not." He answered primly.

"Leave him alone. It wasn't his fault what happened."

He did not enjoy it when demands were placed on him especially when it came to how he protected those he cared about. "It was, though. His sole responsibility was your safety and he knew this when he received his assignment." He explained.

"He's just a kid!"

"He's a trained agent." He argued back.

Joanne sighed. "I was told, when I first started my residency, that you aren't a doctor until you've lost a patient. It's when you learn and he's certainly learned. He will become a better agent and more vigilant as a result of this."

Mycroft knew she wore her heart on her sleeve, a weakness that, in this instance, he could use as an opportunity. "Very well. On one condition. Agent Riley or, when he is not on duty, the agent assigned to you is to be allowed more liberty when monitoring and protecting you."

The elder Holmes still had the duty of handling the man who dared to attack someone close to him. This was another part of him that Joanne did not need to see. She may have seen the horrors of war but he'd seen and known far worse. He did not want to tarnish her opinions on him and his duties no matter their necessity nor did he wish to frighten her away. He saw the way she had looked at his brother moments ago and he'd been close to behaving similarly.

He waited as she weighed her options, deciding between protecting the agent and sacrificing some of her freedom in an attempt to appease him or to abandon Riley to his fate (a black ops assignment he'd been needing to find an agent for in South Korea) and still have the privacy she was accustomed to. He was an expert in predicting people (usually but Watson didn't always conform) but he was certain of the outcome here.

"Fine but I still want some privacy and distance."
He inclined his head in agreement.

"There's-" Swallowing nervously, Joanne continued. "-a few other things we need to talk about."

"Yes?"

"I'd say it's probably time to start thinking about how I'm going to explain-" She gestured to her belly. "-this to people. I'm already getting looks and I can only hide it for so long. I'm probably going to have to go shopping at Mothercare by the end of the week."

"What is there to hide?" He asked.

"Do I tell people that...they're yours?" She asked hesitantly.

"Of course. I would recommend not shouting it from the rooftops but I would actually be quite pleased to be known as their father." He was actually very pleased about the prospect of this.

"Oh." Her cheeks pinked. "All right."

Mycroft smiled indulgently. "Did you truly think everything was cloak and dagger when dealing with the likes of me?"

"Shut up."
Hey all! I am so sorry for being awful at updating. I've had issues with my daughter's school district. She's really disabled and her nurse at school dropped her on her head...twice. And then she got pneumonia and stopped breathing for a minute (I recommend everyone takes CPR classes) and her dad and me got her breathing again and, thankfully, she recovered after a week. We're still fighting her school district and it's driving me crazy.

Thankfully, things have tamed down enough for me to write a short chapter (sorry!) and I hope it's liked? Please let me know and comments are my inspiration! My friend, and fellow author, Marylouleach (shameless plugging for A/B/O Sherlock fans which is what she writes typically) has given me some fantastic ideas for later chapters that are gonna be so much fun!

Chapter Eleven

Mycroft moved through the halls of New Scotland Yard, his umbrella occasionally tapping the ground. He had one last item on his list to take care of before he went back to work despite the late hour. Finally reaching the cell, he waited for the officer to open the door.

Inside, Sherlock glared at him from his position on the hard bunk. "Brother, dear." He hissed.

"Brother mine."

Sherlock stood, his coat swishing behind him as he stormed past him. Mycroft took in the bruising to his knuckles, the tear in his white shirt, and his hair looking far messier than normal. "I heard you broke Mr. Goodall's nose and a few ribs before you were pulled off of him. How appallingly savage of you."

The younger Holmes growled and straightened his coat. "At least I managed to exact some form of revenge while you sat on your fat arse."

Mycroft stiffened at the implication. "I can assure you that Mr. Goodall will suffer my wrath. I pity those that harm those close to us."

"I don't." Sherlock snapped.

"Mr. Goodall will find himself quite destitute by morning. He will also find several charges of embezzlement leveled against him by clients which should guarantee him a sentence in prison long enough to have time to think about his wrong-doings." Mycroft brushed a piece of lint off his suit while Sherlock leaned against the wall.

"How appallingly typical of you, brother. Leaving the work to your minions while you sit on your throne." Sherlock criticized, looking distinctly unimpressed.

Mycroft smiled. "It's called delegation which I know you are familiar with considering your proclivity for appointing tasks to those around you."
"And what of the mugger?"

"It is being handled as we speak." Mycroft answered cryptically.

Sherlock nodded, satisfied. "And Joanne?"

Images of Joanne's blood covered abdomen and bruises blooming on her body flashed through his mind. It was moments like this that he hated having an eidetic memory. "She had some bruising and required several stitches. She has also been told to rest for the next several days due to her blood pressure being higher than normal but is, otherwise, unharmed."

"And the baby?"

Mycroft paused at the door, surprised Sherlock didn't know, yet. "Babies." He corrected.

"Twins?" Sherlock stumbled, his usually graceful gait suffering at his shock and he waited for Mycroft to answer. Once ensconced in the car, he told Sherlock.

"Both are doing well as far as Dr. Thomlinson can tell."

A devious smile suddenly lit Sherlock's face and Mycroft grew suspicious. "Mummy's going to be so excited."

A jerking sensation hit him, fear and dread.

Sherlock's smile grew wider and his eyes rounded, radiating false innocence. "You have told her she's going to be a grandmother, haven't you? That 'Mikey' is going to be a father?"

"No."

"I can give her the good news, then." Mycroft could see Sherlock practically salivating at the chance to redirect their parents' laser focus from him and onto Mycroft.

"You wouldn't!" He didn't shout. It was uncouth.

Sherlock's eyes glittered in amusement. "Why on earth would I keep such joyous news from mummy?"

"I'll cut off your phone."

Sherlock's smile grew wider at Mycroft's expense and he had a sense of foreboding. "You really think that my mobile is my only form of communication?"

Mycroft growled, annoyed at Sherlock's skill at irritating him and his resourcefulness but an idea spread that caused him to smile in return at his dear brother. Sherlock's grin faltered. "You forget just where the good doctor lives. If I am to be dragged into this familial meeting then you will, likely, be dragged along as well. After all, you are the baby of the family and soon to be an uncle."

Mycroft felt a surge of satisfaction when the brunette slumped down in his seat as if to hide from the impending overzealous affections from their parents due to come their way. Mycroft and Sherlock dearly loved their parents but, at times, their affections could be overwhelming.

Joanne woke to the smell of tea and fresh scones. Opening her eyes, she saw Mrs. Hudson placing a silver tray onto the table next to the couch. She must have fallen asleep during Mycroft's visit. God!
How mortifying! She had her duvet from upstairs covering her as well as one of her pillows under her head.

"Oh, Jo, Mycroft told me you might be hungry for some breakfast after the problems from last night. Wasn't sure if you were wanting a fry-up but I can put one on."

Sitting up, she had to stifle a wince as her stitches pulled but, judging by Mrs. Hudson's face, she wasn't successful.

"This is plenty. After all, you're our landlady not our..."

"...housekeeper." She finished with a fond smile and sat to join her.

Jo suddenly felt ravenous and started putting jam and clotted cream on the, still warm, scones under the older woman's approving eyes. She couldn't help the moan of pleasure as the pastry practically melted in her mouth, the combination of sweet and tart flavors erupting on her tongue. "This is fantastic! Thank you."

Mrs. Hudson sipped her tea and chatted about nothing in particular, looking pleased at Joanne's appetite and appreciation, occasionally pushing another scone forward to encourage her to eat more which she happily complied.

She was buttering her third (or was it her fourth?) scone when she realized that she hadn't told her. She hadn't told the woman who was like a mother to her, the woman who had accepted her at her lowest and Sherlock at his worst and had shown nothing but love and support to the two of them.

Suddenly, the food didn't taste as delicious as it had moments ago and it sat in her belly like a rock. She slowly put down her scone and sipped her tea to try and dislodge the guilt clogging her throat.

"Mrs. H?"

"Yes, dear?" Mrs. Hudson put down her tea, as if she knew that what Jo was going to say was important.

"I'm-" God! Why was it so hard to tell people? Sighing, Watson ran a hand through her hair. "I'm pregnant."

Mrs. Hudson's hands flew to her mouth as she shrieked in happiness. "I had suspected but I wasn't going to say anything! You and Sherlock must be so excited! I just knew you two were going to get together."

Joanne sputtered. "We're not-"

The older woman stood and clapped her hands together. "I just know he's going to be a fantastic father."

"Sherlock's not-"

She started moving through the flat, voicing baby-proofing needs. Jesus. She hadn't even thought of baby-proofing. Now that was going to be an Herculean task. Jo shook her head, suddenly remembering the current issue.

"I suppose you will be needing the second bedroom after all. Oh. A nursery!"

She moved in front of Mrs. Hudson who was currently inspecting the fire grate and gently grasped

She frowned slightly. "It's Mycroft's?" Her voice raised at the end in surprise.

Sighing in relief that she'd gotten the older woman's attention, Joanne continued. "Yes." She closed her eyes and took a deep breath to prepare. "And it's twins."

The squeal caused Watson to wince and wonder if her hearing would recover.

"Oh, my! I had no idea you were together. When did this happen? Why were you dating that...that man?" Her eyebrows drew down in disapproval.

She deflated and sat on the settee where she was joined by Mrs. H. "We're not. It was an accident at my clinic. He was trying with another woman, a surrogate, and our procedures got mixed up but we both decided to continue the pregnancy."

"Oh, Joanne." She murmured in sympathy.

"It's not a bad thing just very unexpected. I just never thought I'd be a mum."

She heard her chuckle and she looked up curious. "Well, they'll certainly never be bored with you three."

"No. I don't think they will."
Chapter 12

Chapter Notes

Wow! So many Kudos! It is so exciting to see each one and gives me hope that it's a liked version!
I just want to say thank you so much for your added support! Also, I am beyond nervous about this chapter. I'm kind of going off the behaviors I saw in season 3 of the Holmes parents. The names I researched and saw were the ones I ultimately decided to go with. I see them as smart and gifted but there's an undercurrent of intelligence that rivals their sons. They have to be wealthy to produce such arrogant kids and I may keep them around off and on for fun and drama.
I'm not sure I did Watson's character justice but I'm hopeful she'll be well received since it's an unusual situation for her. Please let me know opinions and any fun Christmas ideas that may make it entertaining. Maybe 1st date ideas? Maybe the fact that Mycroft, as an old fashioned bloke may want to try and "take care" of her but we all know that Watson is a bit obstinace and is independent so it may be a slightly uphill battle.
Any ideas on introducing the sister possibly?
I'm shamelessly begging for plot bunnies so send some hopping!
I love all of you and promise to try and get some more stuff going!
Darkwaters

Chapter Twelve

Joanne Watson was finally free from her imprisonment at 221b. She'd tolerated the two weeks forced upon her by Thomlinson with as much grace as was possible considering she could now claim to be an expert on the goings on on Coronation Street and Emmerdale and had become rather skilled at online shopping...or rather Sherlock had gotten tired of her keyboard fumbling and had purchased a basic wardrobe on the laptop and she'd just typed in her bank card info. She'd been forced to concede buying the bare necessities now that she couldn't even pull on her jumpers without ruining them.

With the end of November came colder weather and she's not been able to justify (or afford since missing so much work) a maternity coat so she'd taken to wearing layers under her black jacket which left things even more noticeable. She'd even had a bloke give up his seat on the tube despite her protests.

Sherlock had also taken a much more notable interest in her pregnancy, especially since it was now known that it was twins. He had even suggested testing nature versus nurture to see if they'd develop the same. He'd not been too pleased when she'd shut that idea down quickly.

She'd also taken to having mild cravings of Branston pickle and Red Leicester cheese sandwiches...actually, branston pickles on anything which had caused her flatmate to pause during tea when she started putting it on her fish fingers and make a disgusted but curious face.

She couldn't help but feel self-conscious in her maternity clothes as they walked up to Lestrade's team and the latest crime scene. It was just unnerving having everything on display and obvious now that she'd hit the fourteen week mark.
Jo stopped suddenly, her nerves starting to get the best of her at the thought of everything being out in the open. It had been hard enough gaining respect from colleagues what with being a woman but now, as a pregnant woman? It'd take a lot more work. Sherlock halted his progress as well and waited, looking at her curiously.

Her mouth was dry as she considered what to say or do. "People are gonna talk." She rasped.

"People do little else." He murmured and continued on without her, knowing she'd always follow. Joanne squared her shoulders, straightened her coat, and started to walk forward.

"Oh, my god! I knew you and the freak were having it off." Sally Donovan's eyes swept over her and she had to fight her instinct to not hit her.

"And now you're having his baby!" She laughed incredulously and Joanne's jaw clenched.

"First off, he's not a freak so you need to pack it in. He's my friend and he's been helping you lot at the Met for a long time with case. Secondly, it's not his; not that it's any of your business who's it is that they are. If I wanted to, I could say quite a few things about your nighttime exploits with certain co-workers." She jerked her head towards Anderson who was stripping off his gloves with a foul look on his face directed at the consulting detective.

Jo leaned forward and whispered towards the DS. "Just a bit of advice. He's never going to leave his wife for you. Most likely it's because he's a rat-faced coward."

Donovan's head jerked back as if she'd been slapped, her curls bouncing. Joanne walked past her with a smug look. "Sorry. Hormones." She shouted over her shoulder without turning back. When she reached Sherlock's side as he was crouched over a severed foot his eyes flicked up to hers, humor lighting them up.

"They'll certainly talk now." He offered her a pair of gloves as she crouched next to him.

Accepting them, she couldn't help smiling. "People do little else." She replied.

xXx

"That was brilliant! The sister-in-law did it and you could tell by the cuts because the man's brother couldn't have done it because he knows how to handle knives since he's a butcher." Joanne was constantly amazed at Sherlock's skills. "And she killed him so her husband would get the life insurance money."

"Of cour-" Sherlock stopped suddenly going up the steps to 221 and Joanne bumped off his back not expecting it.

"Mycroft." He growled and Joanne rolled her eyes and groaned. There had been a tentative and calm peace as of late between the Holmes brothers but when one of them suddenly calls on the other without warning, all bets were off.

She moved back slowly only for her arm to be gently but firmly grasped by Sherlock. "Come along, Jo." She really didn't want to field a fight.

She wondered how long it would take for her to chew her own arm off to escape. Too long.
As they climbed the stairs to 221b, she heard voices and it was Sherlock who suddenly stopped and looked down at their hands as if she'd been the one dragging him up rather than the other way around.

"Clients?" She whispered.

"No."

"Well? Who is it?" Joanne prompted. She didn't particularly fancy hiding out on the stairs since Sherlock had dragged her inside. Although, it did look like he was the one considering bolting.

"Our...parents."

Shock coursed through her. She'd known the Holmes brothers for over two years and had never known that they still had parents. She'd never seen any inkling of them being a part of each other's lives either and had assumed that they had passed away.

"Your parents are up there?" She whispered even though she knew that Mycroft had to know they were hiding on the steps. There was no way he had missed their entering the building. She tilted her head curiously. "I...didn't even know you had parents."

Sherlock rolled his eyes. "Of course we have parents. You are a doctor, aren't you? You should know where children come from by now." He looked pointedly at her belly.

"Ass."

She shifted as she heard low voices coming from their living room through the door. "This might be more of a family thing. I'm just gonna-" She pointed a thumb over her shoulder and started to scoot back.

Sherlock suddenly grinned a large Cheshire Cat grin. "Of course it is a family thing. After all-" He slid behind her blocking her escape. "-you're having their grandchildren and that makes them, and you now by association, family which means that they're going to be so busy with you and fatcroft that I can esca-get back to the work."

Jo's eyes narrowed at the slip and she hissed an angry whisper. "Oh, no you don't. You are NOT leaving me to the wolves. If they're anything like you and Mycroft I need an ally. You. Owe. Me. I will not be some sacrificial lamb just so you can-"

"Ah! In fact, I think I hear Sherlock now." An older woman's voice sounded from behind the door. Fear and panic shot down Joanne's spine. She wasn't ready and to have this sprung on her with no warning was not how she'd envisioned it. Then again, she hadn't even known they had parents.

They both wrestled each other trying to escape and put the other in the line of fire. Sherlock was a wiry bastard and tall while Jo had the advantage of being pregnant which caused Sherlock to be far gentler than regular and she used it to her advantage to fight dirty. She'd just shoved him in front when the door opened to reveal Mycroft who was pale and clearly nervous but, upon seeing them, he rolled his eyes and his shoulders lowered from their previous tense line. "Oh, do grow up!"

The tense atmosphere dissipated slightly at the familiar rebuke and they giggled at his back when Mycroft turned around and stomped back in. He was far too serious. She wondered what it would take to get him to laugh.

When they caught their breath, the nerves came back. Sherlock squared his shoulders and
straightened his back. He looked down at her, his grey eyes softening. "They'll love you." He murmured. "It's my dear brother they'll be mad at."

The tall brunette turned and walked into their flat, confident she'd follow as she always had and always will. Joanne did, just slightly slower than usual.

Her first impression was far different than what she had envisioned. An older woman with short, stylish, white hair was reaching up and hugging Sherlock, having to stand on her toes due to the height difference while, who Jo assumed was their father, stood close by and smiling at the pair of them. Joanne felt like an outsider intruding on a private moment.

She could see where Sherlock and Mycroft got their eyes. Their mother had a matching set. There was intelligence shining behind them but love shined through.

Sherlock's father had a strong, square jaw and slightly curled gray hair. He was wearing a relaxed outfit of tan trousers and a button down with a green v-neck jumper while Mrs. Holmes was attired in a pale pink blouse and black skirt. They looked so...ordinary. She spied Mycroft attempting to blend into the background.

"Oh, Sherlock." She leaned back, appraising her youngest. "You're as thin as a rake! You need to be eating more!"

"I can assure you that I eat adequately." His head turned to her. "After all, I have a live-in doctor."

All eyes turned to her and she had to fight the flush of hot embarrassment rushing to her face at the attention.

Suddenly, she was enveloped in a warm hug. "Oh, you must be Dr. Watson. I've heard so much about you." She leaned back, hands still on Jo's biceps. "But not that you're expecting."

She started steer Jo towards her maroon chair, as if she was on display. "Sit, sit. You should be resting in your condition."

The second her bum hit the chair, the elder Holmes turned to Sherlock with a stern expression. "Is there something you need to tell me, son?"

Sherlock turned pointedly to Mycroft. "You didn't tell them?" Mycroft paled further, his auburn hair standing out shocking against his features.

"Tell us what, Mycroft George Holmes?" Mrs. Holmes asked in a stern voice.

"You didn't tell them the wonderful news?" Sherlock looked positively gleeful at his brother's expense when both parents turned towards Mycroft while Joanne squirmed low in her chair. She'd had enough confrontations for today. Sherlock either didn't realize or didn't care that she would be collateral damage by the end of the day.

"I'll get some tea and biscuits while my dear brother informs you of what has been transpiring while you've been away." Sherlock swept out of the room like a great big bat and into the kitchen, leaving the four of them alone. She knew he was eavesdropping. There was no way he would be playing host without it serving his purposes. She'd be doing the same if it didn't involve her.

Clearing his throat, Mycroft signaled for his parents to take a seat on the settee, which they did, their eyes darting between her and the red-head who sat in Sherlock's chair. "Joanne-" He coughed nervously while his parents' eyes narrowed in suspicion.
"Joanne is pregnant-

"Well, we can see that." Mr. Holmes interrupted.

"-with my children." He finished.

The room was so quiet that you could have heard a pin drop. Both older Holmeses looked back and forth between the two. Their mother's hands went to her mouth and tears started leaking from her eyes. Joanne was horrified at the thought of upsetting the older woman but when she looked up and lowered her hands there was a large smile on her face.

"We're going to be grandparents? Children? That means more than one?" Jo was so surprised when she found herself wrapped in a hug that she didn't even have a chance to respond before the woman pulled away.

"That is generally the plural version for the word child, mummy." Sherlock came in with a large tea tray and set it on the low coffee table.

Mr. Holmes slapped his older son on the shoulder and gripped it, his own features extolling joy at the news.

"Mikey,-" Mycroft cringed at the name and Joanne stifled a snort into her own teacup at the moniker. 
"-why didn't you tell us?" She frowned. "You should have said something. This is important."

"We weren't even aware you were courting. When is the wedding, son?" His father added.

Joanne choked on her tea and started sputtering and coughing, eliciting an outpouring of concern from all Holmeses in the room.

"That's a-uh-a little..."

"Eloquent as always, Jo." Sherlock smirked behind his own teacup where Mycroft was doing an impressive impersonation of a mute.

Mrs. Holmes waved a hand. "Oh, don't bother the lovebirds," Lovebirds? Who were they kidding? Mycroft probably had no idea what the word meant. She liked him but they didn't know each other well enough to develop anything further than a friendship despite her curiosity at maybe wanting more with him. She definitely did not want him to know. She'd heard his opinion on sentiment often enough.

"Things must be moving fast enough without us pressuring them. You remember when we first found out about our Mycroft? Oh my, we were terrified. I don't think our parents ever recovered from the horror of a rush wedding but it might be a good idea to at least plan." The older woman continued, oblivious to the discomfort Joanne, and now Mycroft, were experiencing.

Joanne's stomach sank. She didn't want to hurt Mycroft's and Sherlock's relationships with their parents. She looked over at Mycroft who was staring at his teacup, clearly thinking deeply if the crease in his forehead was anything to go by. She often wondered what went through his and Sherlock's minds.

"Uh, Mrs. Holmes-"

"Lydia, dear." She corrected gently with a fond look. "And this is George. After all, we're going to be family soon! Is it twins? Or triplets? When are they due? Oh, a spring wedding would be beautiful. If I hurry I may be able to get my old dress let out in time and set everything up. You'd
look lovely in it." More like a beached whale, Joanne thought. Lydia looked towards the blond, probably ignoring their less than enthusiastic behaviors. There was no way she could be missing it. A Holmes never missed a thing. "You won't have to lift a finger." The woman's eyes glowed with excitement. "After all, there's the little ones to plan for as well! Oh, my! I'm going to be a grandmother! I think I still have some of Mycroft and Sherlock's baby things...."

The woman was talking a mile a minute and Jo couldn't hardly keep up. Was this where Sherlock got it from? George Holmes was quietly watching and observing them all, most of his focus on herself and Mycroft.

She'd started on flower arrangements for a wedding and questions about whether Joanne was going to find out the genders of the babies and when were they moving in together and nursery color schemes by the time her husband put a hand on her arm to slow her down. Joanne was fighting to keep her breathing even by the overwhelming flow coming from the woman. "Lydia, sweetheart, I rather think that it might be a bit much for them right now. How about we start simple?" He looked to Jo. "How about you join us for Christmas at our estate? By then, things should be sorting themselves out, yes?" It wasn't really a question. He gave her and Mycroft a piercing look as if he, like his sons, could read everything they ever thought, knew, or did just by their faces. She absently wondered if the Holmes boys were outclassed by their parents. If they simply put up a better front of social "normalcy" to hide their intelligence behind.

"Sounds wonderful." She said weakly.

"Well," he slapped his thighs and stood, offering a hand to his wife. "We'd best be off but we hope to see you before Christmas for a proper visit. After all, we're going to be family soon." Even though the words were kind, she felt as if there was an undercurrent to them that warned her that she was going to be family irregardless of her choice.

Jo remained motionless, staring and her teacup hovering near her mouth with numb fingers as George and Lydia left.

"Well, that was certainly entertaining, Mikey?" Sherlock teased Mycroft who returned it with a glare which morphed into concern when he spied Jo not moving, her fingers gripping the teacup so hard that she could practically hear the china creaking.

Sherlock slid to his knees in front of her and carefully pried the cup from her grasp. "Marriage? I can't-"

Mycroft's face twisted in hurt but, what did he have to be hurt about? She swallowed around a lump in her throat. "You need to tell them. I don't want them hurt. You need to tell them that you don't think of me like that. That you have no interest in things like that with me."

"Who says I don't?"

Joanne's head snapped up in surprise. Mycroft moved to take Sherlock's place in front of her on his knees. She vaguely heard the door closing as Sherlock slipped out but her focus was on the man in front of her. He reached out and held her hands in his gently, as if he was holding something delicate and precious. She could smell his expensive cologne, leather, and the scent of books; a scent that was distinctly Mycroft.

"Would you do me the honor of allowing me to court you?"

It was such an old fashioned proposal, so proper that it took her by surprise.
"Uh...Okay?" Mycroft lit up like she had given him a Christmas present.

Joanne tilted her head in curiosity. What would a date with Mycroft Holmes be like?
Chapter 13

Chapter Notes

I am so sorry about not updating sooner. Things have been busy lately and I've had terrible writer's block. I'm nervous about this chapter because what on earth does one say to a genius on a date?!? Gah! Please let me know opinions and ideas as they are definitely appreciated. Also, I love reading them!!!

Chapter Thirteen

Joanne eyed the coat that had been delivered to her by Anthea that morning. She had been surprised at it's arrival. Actually, she shouldn't have been surprised considering it was from Mycroft.

It was a dark black wraparound A-line peacoat with a cowled collar made from a blend of Italian wool and cashmere. It even had enough give to grow with her. Tilting her head, she wondered idly at the cost. It had to have been hundreds of pounds. It was beautiful but a ridiculous purchase considering she'd only need it for a few months. Yes, she hadn't been one hundred percent comfortable with the temperatures but this was silly.

There had also been a set of new gloves, a supple, soft leather with a warm lining expertly stitched inside. On top of the coat had been a dark navy cashmere scarf wrapped in delicate tissue paper and a matching hat. Everything a person...pregnant person would need to weather the coming winter in style. It was feminine, couture, elegant and not her and she didn't know quite what to think of it.

"Oh, just accept the bloody coat. You need it anyway and he will never leave you alone until you do accept it." Sherlock told her from where he was reclining on the settee with his eyes closed and fingers steepled under his chin. Oh, she remembered his determined communication back when they first met with him calling every public phone along her path instead of her mobile.

"Your thinking is distracting me." He waved a hand as if he was flicking away an irritating fly.

Sighing, she took it out of the box and slipped it on, not surprised by the fact that it fit her perfectly but it felt a little heavier than she expected. Joanne shrugged her shoulders at the weight and frowned.

"Kevlar is sewn in." Sherlock's baritone voice answered her unasked question.

Jo rolled her eyes at her mind-reading flatmate. "Oh, my god! Isn't that a bit paranoid?"

Sherlock cracked open an eye. "Do you really require an answer or is this one of those rhetorical questions you frequently ask of me?"

She gave a long-suffering sigh and packed her wallet into her pocket and headed out, knowing that Sherlock was now oblivious to his surroundings.

Mycroft was busy this week with some sort of negotiations in Italy but he was set to return next week in time for the 16 week ultrasound where they might be able to determine the genders of the babies. She wasn't sure she wanted to know; to maybe have it be a surprise since this was going to be the one and only time because she would never do this ever again. Never. Ever. Again.
She texted Mycroft. "This coat way too extravagant."

*-Is it?"* He replied

Rolling her eyes, she texted back. "Yes. There is such a thing as too much."

*-"How will I know how much is too much?"*

Cocky bastard. She could practically see the Holmes-ian smirk all the way in Italy.

"You can figure out a terrorist plot by a single photograph so I think you can figure out how much I think is too extravagant." She told him.

*-"Will you at least keep the coat? I refuse to return it. It would be a waste of Anthea's time, as well as my own, to do so and you do need it."* She could literally hear his voice in the words he used.

The Holmes family was going to be the death of her. "Yes. I'll keep the coat. Thank you but isn't the Kevlar a bit much?"

*-"No. I shall be by to pick you up tomorrow evening at seven."*

Their first date. She wondered what he had planned since he had not deigned to tell her. Sherlock probably knew going by his weird expressing lately. Joanne typed out her next text. "You do know there's such a thing as coming on too strong, right?"

*-"Is there?"*

Smartass but she couldn't help smiling. "I'll see you then." She pocketed her phone and made her way down to the tube, her smile growing wider when she noticed a pocket sewn in that was perfectly designed to holster her gun. Maybe Mycroft got it right after all.

xXx

Jo crossed the street and made it to NSY with time to spare, grabbing sandwiches along the way. Bloody hell. She was always hungry now that she'd finally gotten over the majority of her morning sickness.

Greg was waiting as she came up, a small smile on his face and two steaming paper cups in his hands.

"Hey, mate." She bumped his shoulder in greeting and his smile grew.

"Well, I guess we can't go to the pub but I can still buy a lady a drink." He held out one which she took gratefully.

"Who's this lady you speak of? I thought I was just one of the guys." She asked with a sip of her coffee.

It tasted better than anything she'd had all week and she paused to savor it which forced Greg to double back. Sherlock and Mycroft may have thought she didn't notice but she knew that any teas or coffees in their flat that she had access to were decaffeinated. It just didn't taste the same. She just let them believe it to keep them happy. She might not have Sherlock's skills at acting but she could
sometimes pull one over on the Holmes men.

Greg flushed slightly, his eyes drifting to the swell of her abdomen, an even more obvious visual reminder of her gender than simply long hair or breasts.

"Well-uh-you are but-"

She watched him sputter for a bit before giving in and easing his suffering. "I'm messing with you."

He laughed nervously and she couldn't help rolling her eyes.

"How's Sherlock handling everything?"

Jo took a bite of her sandwich, debating her answer.

"Driving you crazy?" He asked.

She hummed in agreement as they rounded the corner and she spotted a bench for them to eat lunch. "You have no idea."

"I bet. I think Molly's in hiding from his last visit." Shaking his head and chuckling, he started eating.

"I owe her a set of ballet tickets."

The poor woman had been a godsend lately. She wondered if their friends would still be sane by the time the babies were born. She was very patient with him.

Jo and Greg quietly people-watched, the silence between them comfortable and she relaxed. Christmas lights and decorations adorned the streets now that December had started. She wondered just where the time had gone.

"Ella and Mark spending the holidays with you this year?"

"Boxing Day through New Year's this year. The ex is going away with the new boyfriend to Majorca."

She detected a note of bitterness but it was mixed with the joy of spending so much time with his kids. It'd been so long since Greg had spent more than a weekend with them.

"Any plans yourself?"

"I've been summoned-er-invited to spend Christmas with Sherlock and Mycroft's parents."

Greg turned to face her, frowning and curious. "I didn't even know they still had parents. I would have thought you'd be spending it with-you know..."

She still hadn't enlightened him as to the identity of the father. It wasn't that she was ashamed. It was more of a case of her still adjusting to the idea despite it being almost two months since she'd found out. He never mentioned it but she knew he was curious.

"You can ask, you know."

Greg shifted. "I just figured you'd tell me when you were ready. I'd still be here for you whether you told me or not."

God, she loved this man. He was like a brother. Never pressing or judging.
"Technically, I am spending it with the family."

His frown deepened. "I thought you said they weren't Sherlock's."

"And they're not." She swallowed nervously. "They're his brother's. Mycroft's"

Greg swallowed his coffee and started coughing, his eyes watering. "His brother? Wait...that scary bloke with the umbrella."

Jo rolled her eyes. "He's not scary."

"Mmm...I don't know. The dark prince takes many forms."

Jo couldn't stop the laugh that bubbled up and she shoved at the older man who glared good-naturedly at the 'rough' handling. "Oh, my god! He's not!"

"Oh. He is. I always knew you were missing the part of your brain that controls fear." Greg argued.

"He's not scary. He's just...intimidating." Suspicion bloomed and her eyes narrowed. "Wait. What's he done to you?"

Greg hesitates which only makes her all the more suspicious. Damn Holmeses. Between Sherlock, Mycroft, and the parents, she was going to go insane.

Jesus. She wasn't due to hit her fortieth week until mid-April. Jo shook her head wondering just who would be left sane by the end of it. As it was she'd had several text messages and phone calls from Mrs. Holmes confirming their 'visit' in three weeks. It was apparently going to be a three day stay with them leaving the morning after Boxing Day.

"When did you two get together?"

"We're not really together...yet." She started to unwrap her sandwich and shrugged. The idea of being with him was still something that she was a tad nervous about. She'd seen hints of affection but they were frequently shoved behind a wall, hidden from the world. Whether it was to protect her or himself, she didn't know.

Greg swallowed a bite of his sandwich and paused, a thoughtful look crossing his face. "So...dating? What's that even like?"

xXx

Joanne checked her dress in the mirror, a recent purchase that she had gotten. Who knew that there was formal maternity wear? It had been a difficult task owing to the extreme scarring on her left shoulder. It was the one thing on her body that she had issue with, a physical reminder of her time in the army far more noticeable than the nightmares that plagued her but, despite those negative things, she never regretted serving her country. It had made her into the woman she was today. She'd gained confidence, purpose, and skills that only made her stronger.

Mycroft hadn't deigned to tell her where they were going so she had a feeling that more formal wear was appropriate considering his usual behaviors. Joanne usually never spent this much time readying for a date, preferring to having comfort over formality but, for him, she would see how it went. She had a feeling that even if it was a disaster they would still be able to be amicable enough to have a cordial relationship for the sake of the children she was carrying.

Tucking a stray hair into place, she went downstairs and waited patiently. A Holmes was always on
time and she didn't have long to wait when a knock sounded at the door.

It was a strange feeling to see Mycroft in a setting that wasn't during a case or him warning them. He exuded confidence and was in a class far above her own station but he seemed almost...human as he stood before her. Oh, he was still a powerful force but he was showing a different side to him at this moment. Intelligent gray eyes looked her over and she felt as if every secret was exposed but she didn't feel uncomfortable, rather she felt as if it was a privilege and a comfort that she couldn't hide. She didn't need to.

"Doctor Watson."

He held out his arm with a smile and she hesitated before allowing him to guide her. This was...different; formal and definitely Mycroft. "You look breathtaking."

Her face warmed at the compliment and Mycroft's smile widened. "Uh...thank you."

He led her to his car and Jo carefully settled herself inside, grateful that she could still move without needing the assistance of a forklift, and he slid gracefully next to her.

"So, where are we going?"

His smile sent pleasant shivers down her spine. A promise of more.

xXx

Mycroft adjusted his tie as he went to knock on 221b. He had made preparations to ensure success and accounted for every variable. His skills were unmatched in prediction. Sherlock's gift was the past. Analyzing, processing data, and coming to the correct solution. His knowledge was the future and he was determined that his future included the doctor. He didn't want to steal her from his brother. Rather he wanted to share her time.

Joanne was a breath of fresh air. She wore her heart on her sleeve and it was a dangerous thing. To be so open was both a wonderful and a dangerous thing. She brought out emotions in him that compromised him and that he had always thought were something that made one weak but it seemed to strengthen him. His focus had improved and he now had more to fight for. Sentiment and love was a distraction but he wanted it desperately.

He knocked on the door despite already having a key. Mycroft knew that it would make the experience more...realistic.

The door opened and Joanne took his breath away. Blonde hair was curled, piled high on her head in an elegant style with several loose strands framing her heart shaped face. She was wearing a dark blue cocktail dress that carefully concealed her shoulder injury and low black heels, the swell of her abdomen artfully showing and her eyes, blue and bright like a summer sky captured his attention.

Straightening, he smiled, confident at seeing her ready and waiting for him. She returned his smile and it was the most beautiful thing he had seen. She grabbed the coat he had carefully purchased and custom made for her and he felt a sense of satisfaction. He enjoyed caring for those he considered as important to him and she was.

"Hello, Mycroft."

Swallowing, his mouth dry, he held out his arm and Joanne slipped her's through to grip him after a slight hesitation. He could see she was unsure and not used to someone taking the more dominant role in a date but it seemed as if she was willing to humor him.
"Joanne, you look..." Beautiful? Perfect? Why were words failing him now? "...breathtaking."

She looked almost confused at the compliment. "Thank you."

He guided her to the sitting town car and assisted her inside and they headed out.

Their car pulled up to their destination and Joanne's eyes widened, curiosity and surprise evident on the blonde's face. A mammoth greenhouse surrounded by classical English gardens, now bare on the outside in the winter months, stood in front of them. Mycroft felt a feeling of accomplishment at the sight of Joanne wearing the coat he had custom made for her. He had predicted that she would be reluctant to accept a gift, any gift, from him due to her misplaced sense of pride. He enjoyed caring for those that were important to him. He had since he was a small child the first time he had held Sherlock in his arms. Yes, it was a weakness of his that he held hidden close to his chest but Joanne seemed to bring it out further into the open than anyone other than Sherlock ever had in the past.

Joanne's reaction to their location had been exactly as he had predicted and Mycroft could not help the smug feeling. Kew Gardens was a perfect location. He led the blonde through the foliage to the center of the greenhouse, still comfortably warm from the sun in the day. Mycroft waited a beat until they reached a lone table, covered in a crisp white tablecloth. Fine china was set out with gleaming silver utensils and crystal glassware.

He had had fairy lights surrounding them to provide a low light that managed to make the displays more intimate. He had chosen this location very specifically. The flowers that surrounded them were the same species that had been in the garden of her childhood home. His research had discovered that she had spent many an hour playing there and he hoped to evoke the same emotions and sentiment that she had experienced in her youth.

Joanne's posture relaxed and a small smile appeared. Mycroft knew that she was not comfortable with attention and displays of wealth thrown at her but she seemed to appreciate the gesture he had provided. It had been a gamble that he had been determined to win and he clearly did if the expression on her face was anything to go by.

"It's beautiful." She breathed.

No one before him had made such an effort or true gesture of affection more than the cursory dinner date. He would win her heart. After all, a Holmes never fails.

"You didn't have to go to this much trouble." She winced, looking distinctly uncomfortable. "It's a bit much."

He smiled in return and moved close to whisper in her ear. "Oh, but I enjoy it."

Joanne shivered and huffed a nervous laugh. "You mean showing off?"

His smile widened into a dangerous thing. "Never. I'm simply spending an evening with someone whose company I enjoy and hope to continue to spend time with."

He gestured for her to precede him and pulled out her chair to assist her in sitting before he took his own seat. He gestured to the server who went through the ritual of serving his wine and pouring Joanne a glass of iced water. They only had a moment before another server arrived with their soup course.

He sipped at the delicate broth, enjoying the flavors bursting on his tongue. Even though he could see that Joanne was out of her element slightly and thrown off, she seemed to be enjoying herself. Their conversation stayed away from politics and topics that could even closely be related to either
his work or that of her's with Sherlock for which, he was grateful. He watched her, carefully analyzing every reaction, memorizing every detail of her, and enjoying every moment he spent in her company.

She looked around at their surroundings and shifted slightly, clearly uncomfortable at the opulence. "It's still a bit much but it's a nice change. Maybe I should look into getting myself a job as a 'minor government official'." She said jokingly as she took a bite of her beef wellington.

"Oh, but you've only to ask."

"Isn't that a bit like nepotism?" She asked with a wry smirk.

"Advantages of position." He explained airily.

"I walked into that one, didn't I?" She grimaced in self-deprecation.

"Of course."

Joanne’s answering laugh made every effort he had put forth in their date worth it.

xXx

The walk back up the stairs to 221b was fraught with tension and nervousness on her part but it was the good kind, the kind where you had the excitement of seeing if things would go further.

Mycroft was no longer the unsure man he had appeared when his parents had been present. Instead, he was the confident, almost mysterious, presence that she had known since meeting him that night in the abandoned warehouse when she had first came to know his younger brother.

He'd never really frightened her. Intimidated, yes, but never truly frightened her even though, subconsciously, she knew that he should. Maybe on some level she felt that he had been interested in her for a long time. Probably curiosity at first but maybe more as time went on. She held a similar view of the elder Holmes. She did have a terrible weakness when it came to Holmeses and, in Mycroft's case, she was rapidly weakening further.

While the date had been an amazing experience, it had definitely thrown her far outside her comfort zone. Perhaps that had been Mycroft's intention? He did tend to do that to people but it had seemed that it was for a different purpose. Was it to impress her? Well, that wasn't necessary. She knew him and didn't need a show but, if he felt he needed to do it then she wouldn't stop him but she could limit it. She didn't mind ceding control on occasion but it was not going to be every time with him. It would make for a very unbalanced and unhealthy relationship dynamic.

"I had a wonderful time tonight, Mycroft. Next time I pick the activity."

"I look forward to it." He practically purred and her eyebrows shot up in surprise.

He stood across from her at the doorway and Jo waited, practically vibrating as Mycroft snaked an arm around her waist and leaned forward. From this close she could see the gray eyes that she'd always assumed were one simple shade were several that made up the color and they were full of dark desire.

She felt the tentative brush of his lips against hers and she closed her eyes, tilting her head to get a better angle and she raised her hand to the back of his head, feeling the short strands at the base of his skull under her fingertips and pressed him to her as she took control of the kiss, opening her mouth and twining her tongue with his, feeding everything she felt for this man that had started to become
an integral part of her life.

When they parted for air, she leaned back with a smirk at the sight of the disheveled and clearly flustered man in front of her. He may have a lot of power but so did she.
Chapter 14

Chapter Notes

Hi al! I had hoped to get the Christmas chapter up in time to coincide with the holidays but RL decided to throw my family a curveball. Our transmission on our "new car" that we'd bought a month ago went out. There is a special place in hell for someone who sells a bad car to a family with a kid in a wheelchair when we tell them it's for hospital transportation for our medically fragile child. :(
I hope this chapter is ok and I look forward to hearing everyone's thoughts via reviews!!! Thank you for reading!

Chapter Fourteen

"No, Mycroft! This is not ok."

Mycroft stood opposite his...girlfriend? He bristled at her refusal to listen to reason. Joanne Watson was angry and, despite being eighteen weeks into her pregnancy, she was almost intimidating.

"This is my work! Don't you understand? I have to attend this medical conference!" She snapped. Joanne threw another blouse into her suitcase with far more force than was necessary. "Practicing medicine means exactly that! Practicing! And these are new wound care techniques that I have to learn to care for my patients!"

Mycroft barely kept a hold on his temper. The thought of Joanne leaving London was unacceptable in her delicate condition. The topic of her attending this medical conference had come up in their 'date' last week when she had come to his house with fish and chips and several movies. It had been quaint but, comfortable and had left a warm feeling in his chest when she had fallen asleep on his him, her blond hair tickling his neck as she rested on his shoulder.

There had been kissing but he refused to go further despite the temptation. This was important to him and he didn't want to push the blonde and wreck what he was building with her. There was also still an underlying worry that he'd hurt her in her delicate condition despite reassurances from her doctor (and her) that it was safe. She was so fragile and he couldn't bear the thought of hurting her. She'd been frustrated and Mycroft wondered if he was doing the right thing when she'd tried to seize control of their encounters. He would never forgive himself if something was to happen. What if he was too rough with her? What if she hurt herself? If it was to happen he wanted it on his terms. There would be time soon enough. Perhaps once the children were born.

He had thought he had put the discussion of her attending to rest. He had calmly explained his concerns; that Nottingham, at a two hour drive, was too far a distance from her doctor, that she was too far along in her pregnancy for travel, that going by train made it difficult for his team to ensure her safety. She was traveling coach for god's sake!!!

"You're not going, Joanne, and that is final!" He growled and the blond stiffened, her her face becoming alarmingly blank and her blue eyes turning icy.

"Excuse me? In case you haven't realized, I need to complete this to maintain my license. I still need to work!" Joanne snapped back, her hands on her hips.
Mycroft grit his teeth. Couldn't she see that he was protecting her? Trying to keep her safe? "You don't have to work. If it is because you are concerned over finances then I am more than capable of ensuring you and our children don't go without."

Her head reared back as if he had slapped her and her expression shuttered into a dangerous calm. "No. Just. No." She turned, putting her back to him and zipped up her small case. "I am going, Mycroft Holmes, and, unless you have your damn minions drag me back like some recalcitrant child, that is final. I am more than capable of deciding what is and isn't ok with me."

He firmly didn't agree.

Mycroft blinked at the refusal. Really, why would his offer of assistance bother her so? He was used to his obstinate brother continuously refusing to listen and not accepting his help but Joanne usually heeded his advice. She was the calm in the storm that was usually caused by Sherlock and he never realized until now just how much he relied on her acquiescence to help keep him somewhat steady as well.

She spun around with her case in her hand, making a move to walk past him when she suddenly stopped, grabbing her rounded belly with a gasp and Mycroft's anger suddenly left him as fear crawled up his spine. "Joanne! What..."

Joanne stilled, a small smile on her face and waved him away. "No. It's fine. It's uh-" Giggling weakly, she stepped closer and grabbed his hand, placing it under her shirt and onto her abdomen. "It's one of the babies kicking. It's nothing bad."

Mycroft sighed in relief and closed his eyes to focus on the tiny life that decided to make their presence known. A small flutter, like the wings of a butterfly moved under his palm and he smiled. Wonder filled him at being able to experience this moment. He was grateful for the accident at the clinic, that Giselle had not been the one to conceive and that it was Joanne. He would never have been able to have moments like these with her.

The auburn haired man knelt in front of Joanne, gently lifting the fabric covering the proof of their children and he placed both hands on her abdomen, hoping to feel more kicks. He was rewarded for his efforts when Joanne guided his hand lower and to her right and a small shift under her soft skin alerted him to the movement of their second child growing inside her.

A small crack appeared in the ice that covered his heart, the love he felt for these beings he had yet to meet crept in and were making a space there. Mycroft carefully placed this memory in his mind, careful to lock it safely away to never forget it. He slowly stood and then tension left the air. "Mycroft, I have to do this. I need to have this independence and a life outside of..." She waved a hand around as an all encompassing gesture. "...this. I love solving cases with Sherlock and spending time with you but I also love being a doctor. That is a part of who I am and I can't lose that."

Mycroft's lips thinned as he waged an inner battle. It was difficult. He was a virtuoso when it came to negotiation between representatives of other powers and countries. The man was skilled in handling people and rarely had to resort to things as distasteful as threats. His name and level of power was enough to get what he wanted, but this one woman was never one to bow down to his wishes.

Joanne took Mycroft's silence as a refusal and she sighed, looking far more tired than she should be in her condition. Really, she should be resting far more than she clearly was. Just what use was Dr. Thomlinson if he could not get the blonde to listen to reason?
"If the situation was reversed and I was the one telling you to stop doing what you do, wouldn't you chafe at the limits being set by me? There's nothing going on right now. No threats towards myself or your brother that aren't the usual ones and no risky cases going on so there's nothing to worry about. I'm not flying somewhere dangerous or even leaving the country and it's not that far away. This is paranoid even for you."

The auburn haired man's jaw ached from where he clenched his jaw, not appreciating being bested for once by logic and stubbornness. Paranoid? He was never paranoid. He was realistic. Risks were something he worked with and prevented every day.

There was also the fact that just last week, despite his and his people's best efforts, news of Dr. Watson's pregnancy had been made public. He'd known it had been simply a matter of time but he had been hoping for it to be further along into the pregnancy, preferably towards the end when he'd be able to further limit such outings due to her needing to remain close to home for necessity.

He had managed to keep the information from being published in well known newspapers, gossip columns, and most blogs but it had managed to go viral via a young man's blog complete with a picture of her standing in a cafe next to his brother, her rounded abdomen obviously showing her pregnancy with the false supposition that the parentage was his brother. If someone could get close enough to snap a simple picture, who was to say that someone couldn't get close enough to cause her harm?

Several agents and analysts had been summarily and promptly demoted, fired, and reassigned due to the leak and he wondered why the thought of the misconception of his brother being the father of his children bothered him so. There was also the reaction of some of the readers that caused him pause. Some were outraged and upset over the belief that his brother was 'off the market' so to speak while others felt vindicated that they 'had been right' in the belief that Watson was in a relationship with his brother even though Joanne had repeatedly stated that her and Sherlock were not together. Risks from both types of people made him wish to simply spirit the woman away for her own protection and his peace of mind.

The splitting of his attention was also causing it to be difficult for him in his line of work and it was beginning to suffer for it. He well remembered from when his brother had been forced into the difficult position of having to go on hiatus to remove the threat of Moriarty's web due to such publicity.

Mycroft returned her sigh and pinched the bridge of his nose. "It is not simply paranoia, Joanne and, while I understand your reasoning, you must comprehend the difficult position I am in. I am simply concerned for your well-being."

She rolled her eyes. "Please." The sarcasm behind that simple word grated on his thinning patience. "I probably have more security than the queen and I can handle myself. It's one week and I'll be back before you know it. I've gone to these things many times even when there actually were threats against me and it's always been a boring and uneventful affair."

A gentle, chaste kiss and Mycroft focused on her eyes, warm and a calm blue like a summer sky. How she managed to retain such when dealing with a cold, cruel man such as himself, he would never know. "I know that you can handle yourself, but just because you can do so does not mean you should always have to do so."

Joanne's answering smile was warm. "Thank you. Get some rest. After all, the British Government can't run on only four hours of sleep." She picked up her case and made her way down the stairs.

He heard the muffled conversation between his brother and her as she said her goodbyes and she
was out the door, leaving to go to the station. He did not enjoy the feeling of not being in control. It made him...uneasy.

He collected himself and made his way down the stairs from Joanne's bedroom, pausing to take a deep breath before entering the living room where his brother was standing tuning his violin with a look of disdain on his face directed at him.

"Really, brother, such actions are beneath you."

Mycroft stiffened at the verbal jab. "And what actions are those? Surely they aren't any more unpardonable than eavesdropping on a private conversation."

Rolling his eyes the younger Holmes plucked a string. "Trying to keep our dear doctor from something as trivial as a medical conference." Sherlock's eyes narrowed. "Unless there is a reason you are not telling me?"

He sniffed, insulted that Sherlock would insinuate he would even consider allowing her to attend if there was a higher degree of risk involved. "Of course not!"

Sherlock took his bow and ran it down the strings sharply. "'Take but degree away, Untune that string and hark what discord that follows'."

Glaring at him, he tapped his umbrella on his Italian leather shoe. He certainly did not appreciate a lecture from him. "Shakespeare, dear brother? Quite an obscure quote from you. Troilus and Cressida, act one scene three."

"Appropriate quote one would think. If you only change the tension on a violin's string by the smallest amount it is still enough to create discord. You cannot control or change Joanne. It would only destroy what progress you have made. You are not at war with her. Do not make it so. She is not a person that will submit to suit your wishes. Eventually, she may tire of them."

"Do not believe that I do not understand this about her. I know but I cannot help my concern for her." Mycroft snapped.

He almost made it to the door when he heard his brother respond quietly.

"Sentiment?"

He closed his eyes and gripped the handle tight. Was it simply a case of sentiment? He'd come to care for the doctor since he'd first met her back at the warehouse when he'd tried to work her out, find what made her tick, and see just what kind of a person she was. He'd thought her ordinary but it seemed she was anything but. Especially as of late. She had been handling her unique situation with the utmost grace and was allowing him the chance to be a part of her life. "No. Love." He murmured.
Chapter 15

Chapter Notes

Omg! Nearly 700 kudos! And so much love shown by comments! It warms my heart to feel so loved! Thank you so much!
This chappie will be the last one before the fun of Christmas with the Holmases! Any ideas for humor and drama are welcome since I have yet to write the chapter! Thank you so much for everything! It’s you guys that keep me writing! I’m hoping the main characters aren’t too OOC and, if they are, please let me know! I rely on reviews all the time.

DarkWaters

Chapter Fifteen

Sherlock returned from his latest case exhilarated. What he had originally thought was a simple adultery case brought to him by a client had turned into a drug smuggling ring with the man’s wife heading the small group that had taken him three days to solve. He’d finally been able to really get into a good adrenalin-fueled chase and been able to stretch his legs.

It was difficult. While he needed and craved having Joanne with him on cases, he couldn’t take on the more dangerous ones with her at his side like he normally would have. The danger to her in her current state, not to mention Mycroft’s underlings hanging about, made it near impossible to do his job so his conductor of light was relegated to assisting at crime scenes and on case intakes; sometimes being able to go with him in guaranteed low-risk ones. He looked forward to when his friend was finished...gestating.

He needed her back here, though. It just wasn’t the same without her even with her current limitations. Why she had to leave for a conference to continue to learn to care for hypochondriacs, whining new mothers, geriatrics, and a multitude of others was beyond him. Her excuse of bills was boring. His mind would stagnate if he had to do the same.

Stepping into the living room of 221b, he immediately knew someone had been inside. The rug was slightly off-center, his beaker of hydrochloride acid had been moved to the other side of the table, a small burn on the linoleum from where it spilled from being bumped, and...a knife was missing from the knife block. He continued his survey of the flat, coming to a sudden stop in his room, a sick sense of dread filling him when he saw the knife, stabbed upright on nightstand right through the latest ultrasound picture of the twins. He’d made a copy out of curiosity and, dare he say it, excitement at the prospect of becoming an uncle.

There was also a picture of the two of them laughing next to Lestrade in his office at NSY underneath, the knife carefully going through both Sherlock and Joanne. The picture had clearly not been taken through regular means. The angle and quality was indicative of it being taken from a long distance and, likely, through the window from one of the office buildings across the street.

He leaned closer, his eyes going over every detail while his hand texted furiously. There was little evidence to go on. Judging by the angle of the knife, right-handed, the depth of the stab showed extreme anger, and the pictures made it obvious that it was personal. It was opportunistic but well
planned. The perpetrator had clearly known she was out of town and that he had not been home and was practiced at not leaving traces other than the minimum. He or she had equipment that was used as surveillance, professional grade, so this is more than a simple fanatic. There was just too little data and time!

Someone was angry about the pregnancy but was it anger that she was now unavailable to someone and they had wanted her or was it that they were angry at the perceived father of the unborn children that she was involved with? Knowledge that Mycroft was the father was extremely limited and the inclusion of Sherlock’s picture, as well as the location of the threat, made it a slim possibility and encouraged the theory he was responsible for the pregnancy. The news tabloids and blogs stating this falsehood only compounded it. Or it could simply be a threat to get to his brother but it seemed unlikely. It looked far too personal. Was it against him due to the misplaced belief that he was the father? Or against Joanne? Or even against the children?

No additional evidence was forthcoming, but that in itself was something to consider. Whoever it was was careful. Nothing was brought into the flat other than the picture to give a better chance at identifying the intruder. Most of the things already in the flat were used in the veiled threat. It was likely were no footprints, very little was disturbed, and the intruder had been very careful. Still, on the off chance that he (likely male with the strength needed to have forced the knife that deep ) had made a mistake, Sherlock pulled a set of tweezers out of his nightstand and lifted the edge of the first image to snap a picture of both.

Taking out his phone, Sherlock quickly texted a picture and sent it to his brother. He did despise allying with him but, he made exceptions when it came to a select few, Joanne being one of them.

-Where is she? SH

*-On train 32 returning to London. She is five minutes out. The situation is being handled and a car is being sent. MH*

-CCTV? SH

*-Malfunction outside Baker Street from 18:32-18:57. MH*

-I’m faster. SH

Sherlock glared at his phone, cursing his brother's overconfidence and, grabbing his coat, he headed out the door. He had little faith in the minions employed by his dear brother. They had already failed once.

xXx

A pair of golden eyes watched through a high-powered sniper scope as Joanne Watson struggled with the black suitcase on wheels, her gravid belly making her movements awkward but he could see that she would never accept help due to her stubborn pride. Despite the current cumbersome shape of her body, she still moved with a grace and strength that many women in similar states of mid-pregnancy would be envious of.

He debated acting now. She was relatively unprotected other than two agents, one in front and one trailing behind, but he knew temptation would be his downfall. He needed to make a plan that would not fail. He'd been watching her from a distance since Sherlock had taken his own life and Moriarty had promised her to him before his untimely death but once he'd discovered the younger Holmes had faked it and was on the hunt for those affiliated with the consulting criminal he'd had to distance himself. He'd never stopped watching her even though it was from afar.
He was patient, a skill necessary for a sniper. He had needed the perfect time to strike and take what was rightfully his but he'd clearly waited too long since she was now pregnant with that bastard's children. He'd wanted to collect her after Moriarty's unplanned suicide but the suddenly increased security around her had made it too difficult to get her as planned and big brother had been watching her too closely. Not to mention it had continued to remain so during Holmes's hiatus and hunt. He'd been on the run until he'd also successfully faked his own death.

Everything was that bastard Sherlock Holmes's and his brother's fault. He had driven Moriarty to kill himself and destroy his chance to claim the doctor. He'd been put in a nearly impossible situation, but he'd been careful with his assets, favors owed, and money when he'd started seeing James Moriarty start to become unstable in his obsession with Sherlock Holmes and that was what had spared him from both Holmeses.

His finger carefully squeezed the trigger but not with enough pressure to actually shoot. He wanted to kill the unborn children tainting his beloved but he knew in his heart that it would destroy her. They were still a part of her but she should have been carrying his children. Perhaps, in time, he could come to accept them since they were half her's but it wouldn't be long before he would give her the ability to provide more children, their own children.

In many ways Watson was like him, a soldier, an expert marksman, and discharged from the life of combat due to injury. They both had stood at the side of geniuses and had become stronger for it. The only difference between them had been that they had been on opposite sides of the war between the madmen. She was his perfect match. His omega to his alpha.

He well remembered the first time they had met. He had been shot in the leg in Afghanistan by a rival sniper protecting the enemy. She'd been glorious and in her element as she kneeled over him, trying to stem the flow of blood and ordering him to stay conscious despite the burning pain in his leg. She was magnificent, her blond hair sparkling in the bright sun and blue eyes like tempered steel intensely focused on the task at hand. A man had gone down next to them and Joanne had pulled out her weapon with smooth practiced ease and took down the insurgent that had shot him with nothing more than a browning. He'd thought he would lose the leg but she'd managed to save it to where he only suffered a minor limp. He'd never seen a more talented soldier and, not only that, she was intelligent and a doctor.

He watched her and saw her tense as the two agents moved closer to her but not overly so. She knew something had changed and she needed to be alert. Her right hand slowly made it's way into her coat, likely reaching towards her gun which she clearly carried almost constantly and he couldn't help but smile. Very observant, Joanne. Good girl! They were so alike it was a match made in heaven.

A tall blur of grey topped with ebony curls ran across the platform and through the crowds, occasionally glancing at his mobile. The man sneered as the younger Holmes descended on his intended. He had no right. He did not deserve her. It was clear that he had discovered his message and he was frightened. Rightfully so. He could never measure up to him. He was a failure as both a partner to her and father to the children she carried. He could see the expression of irritation and fondness as he took the case from her and lead her away, his gray eyes scanning the platform for threats.

He unscrewed the parts to his weapon and placed them lovingly in his case. Soon, Joanne. Soon.

xXx

Sherlock raced towards Paddington Station like an avenging angel, his coat flying behind him. Joanne was predictable in her habits to a fault, perhaps too predictable. She'd be heading from the
station to the underground to get home.

Sherlock’s eyes darted around at his surroundings and he saw...nothing. There was no one that he saw that could be the culprit behind the threat at Baker Street. Everything was boring. Businessmen, tourists, regular working people but he could feel that they were being watched.

There. There was Joanne on platform 3 exiting the train, her small suitcase in tow. She tensed and her eyes scanned her surroundings and she spotted the two agents near her as they moved closer as if they anticipated an attack. Joanne never carried a handbag, preferring to keep her hands free and he saw her surreptitiously slide her hand into her coat. Sherlock knew what she was doing. Her gun was in a side pouch of her coat, an addition Sherlock had suggested,

His phone started beeping at him repeatedly and Sherlock debated checking it but he couldn't let her out of his sight. It beeped at him once more and he had no choice but to pull it out. He couldn't risk being uninformed and his brother was clearly concerned if he was texting. A string of texts lit up the screen.

*-A car will be waiting for you.-MH*

A moment passed and then another message lit up his mobile.

*-No identifiable fingerprints.-MH*

Sherlock growled at the lack of evidence and his phone beeped insistently once more. Mycroft loathed texting but he was likely speaking to his team and didn't have the ability to talk.

*-Joanne is at risk of pre-eclampsia with a twin pregnancy. Added stress could create high blood pressure and harm her and the children she is carrying. Until we know for certain who and what the threat is it would be best to not cause her undue stress.-MH*

Sherlock practically growled at that last message and, after glancing up to check on Jo, he typed a reply.

- She is more than capable of handling threats and should be on alert. Is this your concern or a valid reason?” -SH

Less than thirty seconds passes before Sherlock gets a reply.

*-Both. Doctor advises no stress. -MH*

The younger Holmes grit his teeth in protest but he did not want to risk Jo's health. Lengthening his stride, he made it to Joanne's location and made a point to make brief eye contact with the two agents hovering nearby to warn them that if something was to happen to her they'd have him to answer to as well as his pompous ass of a brother. Going by the paling of their features they received his message loud and clear.

"Sherlock? What are you doing here?” Jo's eyes narrowed in suspicion. ”What'd you do?” She slowly removed her hand from her coat but she remained tense.

He placed his palm over his heart in mock hurt. "Why must you always assume I did something? Can't I just be greeting my friend after she's been away?"

Jo's expression showed she was unimpressed by his acting skills. "No. Half the time you carry on conversations when I'm not even in the flat so something's up. What is it?”
Sherlock's mind whirled through possible acceptable answers to her query, his feet taking him to the room in his mind palace that was Jo's. It was always warm and sunny, the smell of tea and the apple soap she preferred which only served to accent the scent of antiseptic and gun oil from her meticulous care of her weapon made up who she was. Feminine, intelligent, Doctor, and soldier. It's who she was. Then he remembered her and Mycroft's last conversation he'd managed to overhear.

He came back to himself with a start and saw Joanne waiting with a raised brow, her patience clearly beginning to thin. "Bored. Lestrade has no cases and nothing has come up from private clients."

Jo scowled outright. "I may not be a genius but I can tell when you're lying like right now."

"I'm not lying. There are no cases."

"That part may be true but you're not down here because you're bored." She told him with suspicion lacing her words.

Sherlock sighed dramatically and decided to go for a believable half-truth. "Mycroft is in Germany and was concerned. Rather than have his minions greet you I figured that it would be preferable for all parties involved if I was here rather than them."

Jo gave him a piercing look and whatever she saw seemed to satisfy her enough to let it go.

She shook her head and laughed. "You know, I had a feeling someone other than the minions Mycroft assigned to keep an eye on me was watching me." Shaking her head ruefully, the blond followed Sherlock away from the station platform. "It had to have been you. I guess I'm getting paranoid."

Sherlock’s jaw clenched as he fought the instinct to inform her of the threat but his irritating, overbearing, pompous ass of a brother’s text messages kept flashing behind his eyes. “Perhaps.”

Once they reached the surface, Sherlock eschewed his brother’s offered transportation for a cab which pulled up the second he raised his hand.

“How the bloody hell do you do that? It takes me ages to get one to stop.” She glances at him curiously.

“Currently it’s benefit of a visibly pregnant friend but normally...” His lips twitched as he fought to remain serious. “...natural talent.”

He took the case from her and loaded it into the trunk before she could protest and Joanne rolled her eyes as he ushered her inside. “Twat.”

Sherlock’s eyes looked all around them, trying to see something out of the ordinary.

“C’mon, mate! Are you coming or going?”

The impatient cab driver quickly stopped Sherlock’s search. He’d come to trust Watson’s feelings over the years they’ve known each other. He slid in next to his friend and, as he turned to glance out the window for one final search, he saw a flash of blond carrying a suspicious case that had no business in the crowds on a busy London street.
Hi all,
I just want to say a huge thank you to everyone who has been kind enough to give me kudos and been so patient with me and my slow updates. It's just a bit harder writing this story since the character behavior is a bit more complex than I ever expected and I'm always worried about getting it wrong. There's also the issue of the fact that I was naive and didn't write out the full plot before I started writing this story. I'm so sorry that I'm slow!

This chapter was a bit of a challenge and I just hope I got it right. I'm trying to give a bit more info on just how the characters came to be. I'd really appreciate constructive criticism and any ideas that may assist me in future chapters.

Thank you again to those who are sticking with me and giving me so much support! I hope I got this chapter right and I am definitely thinking about the next chapter which should be fun to write. I've also been plotting two other Star Trek stories to try and get my mind going. I've got their plots written out but I have learned my lesson in posting so it'll probably be a while before they're up so that any readers won't have to wait so long for updates. I promise to do better and, again, I definitely appreciate everyone who is kind enough to write comments, give me ideas, and kudoses. I've actually had it where a fellow author one_curly_haired_fangirl has made my other story so much better than what I had originally wrote so I definitely take every idea and comment to heart.

Thank you again and thank you for your patience!
Darkwaters

Chapter Sixteen

The past week had been rather trying for Mycroft Holmes. He had exhausted every avenue to discover just who had made the threat against Joanne Watson and his brother as well as the tampering of the security cameras outside their flat. He was no closer to an answer than he was seven days ago and his suggestion of placing the good doctor into protective custody, whether she agreed or not, had been met with outright scorn and shot down quite thoroughly by his obstinate sibling. The stress would also surely harm both her and the children she was carrying and that was exactly what they were trying to avoid. No further threats had been made that they had detected but it still sat uneasy with him. The thought of anything happening to either of them frightened him in a way that he had never thought possible.

Sighing in frustration, the elder Holmes put down his coffee and collected the papers littering his desk in his home office, placing them in his briefcase. He would continue his efforts at his parent’s.

xXx

It wasn't too long into their nearly two hour drive to New Milton that Joanne fell asleep in the car. She was exhausted from a twenty-four hour shift at St. Elizabeth's. She'd been a last minute cover for two of the regular A&E doctors that had called in ill. It had irritated Mycroft to the point that he had wanted to step in but he had forced himself to refrain...barely. He understood that Joanne had parts of her own life that would never be a part of his and interfering would break something between them.
that he might not be able to fix.

"She looks poorly." Sherlock murmured, low enough to not disturb the blonde.

Mycroft hummed in agreement and pulled himself away from his thoughts when his brother suddenly broke the silence between them that had been present for most of the trek. His eyes drifted to the rear view mirror. Jo was indeed rather pale. Her eyes were ringed with dark circles which made them stand out vividly against her skin and she appeared to have lost another two pounds if the state of her cheekbones was anything to go by. She was still not putting on what he felt was adequate weight and that concerned both Holmeses greatly. There were still days when morning sickness would make an unwelcome appearance and there was little that they could do other than try and support her as much as she would allow them. Doctor Thomlinson wasn't able to do much either except reassure them that she was still healthy enough and would eventually put on more weight as the pregnancy progressed.

"Mummy will likely lament over this fact and feed her enough for ten people." Mycroft reassured him and Sherlock curtly nodded in agreement, his lips turning down in a moue of displeasure as he worried about his friend.

"She will likely do the same for you, brother mine." He added and Sherlock slunk lower in his seat.

The younger Holmes's expression hardened as he remembered the threat against his friend. "Any luck?"

Mycroft mirrored his brother's expression and gripped the steering wheel so hard his knuckles turned white. "No." He turned to the brunette. "You?"

"No." And that was all that was said on the tense subject.

Mycroft turned off the country road and into the long driveway that led up to their parent's small cottage. There was a light dusting of snow on the normally green grounds and it looked like something out of a mix of a history book and a fairy tale.

xXx

Joanne's first impression of the house when Mycroft gently woke her was one of surprise. She'd always known that Mycroft and Sherlock had come from a well-to-do family by their public school accents and behaviors but she had almost been expecting a giant drafty manor not a cozy cottage. With the snow starting to settle it looked very warm and inviting.

As she slid out of the back seat she wondered if she would fit in or even be accepted into such a family. Being friends was one thing but family? That was something else entirely. She didn't exactly have the best track record when it came to familial relationships.

As if sending her thoughts, both Holmes brothers subtly moved to stand closer to her in a show of solidarity.

"My boys!" Mrs. Holmes moved with a speed that belied her age and enveloped her son's in crushing hugs and then moved onto her. "Oh, and you, Joanne!" She latched onto her and she had to stand on tiptoes to try and match the older woman's height. "Look at you lot!" Her gray eyes take them all in desperately happy. Joanne smothered a snicker at the pained winces from both Sherlock and Mycroft at the attention.

"You all need feeding up!" She admonished them but there is a smile on her lips and she wags a finger at Jo but doesn't relinquish her hold on her. "Especially you. You're eating for three and don't
think I haven’t noticed how pale you are. You look like you’ve been burning the candle at both ends.”

As Jo started to open her mouth to let her know she was fine she caught Mr. Holmes out of the corner of her eye shaking his head in a small warning that it was futile for her to argue. She followed Mycroft and Sherlock to the boot to grab her case only to receive a glare for her troubles and they were quickly ushered inside by the grandparents-to-be.

Startling at the warm feel of Mycroft’s hand on her lower back as he guided her inside, she leaned into the warm touch until she caught the pleased smile from Holmes senior. God! When had she become so...so co-dependent. Even thinking the word made her scowl and she quickened her pace, missing the hurt look on the auburn-haired man’s face.

Mrs. Holmes smiled at the trio as she leads them upstairs. "I'm afraid our home in Sussex is undergoing some remodeling so there's only the three bedrooms."

Joanne raised a brow at this and even she couldn't miss the signs that Mrs. Holmes was setting them up.

“Subtle, mother.” Sherlock muttered but Lydia Holmes feigned deafness and opened the door to her right. “Sherlock, dear, your room’s your regular one.” She pointed to the room opposite and Sherlock rolled his eyes at the dismissal much like a teenager.

Joanne and Mycroft followed her into an airy, tastefully decorated bedroom. It was in shades of light blues and greens, a white dresser on one side of the room and a double bed dominating the space with a fluffy blue duvet coving it.

"I hope you don't mind sharing. I know that Mycroft told me that you two were still working things out but with the remodeling going on I figured that you wouldn't mind." She turned and regarded her son and Jo with such an innocent look in her gray eyes that she almost believed her. Almost.

"Uh-"

"This will be fine, mummy."

She left them to unpack with a soft look in her eyes directed at the pair.

Joanne looked at the bed and felt stupid at her apprehension at sharing a bed with him. She’d never been one to be shy and had always been a confident woman but it felt different with Mycroft. It felt like more. There seemed to be a subtle power shift at times between them and she felt almost less and more at the same time. It was an unfamiliar thing. She was looking forward to the end of her pregnancy despite the fact that it was a wonderful experience to bond and feel her-no their children grow but she wanted to regain her sense of self. This dependence frustrated her to no end and feeling cornered, controlled, and in a sense betrayed by her own body was unpleasant to say the least.

She indicated the left side of the bed closest to the door. She'd never stayed the night with any of her previous partners and it was a new experience for her. Jo idly wondered what it would be like to do so with Mycroft. Would he face away from her, ashamed at almost being forced by the matchmaking done by his mother? Face her and watch her with those knowing and penetrating gray eyes, dissecting every feeling and emotion she felt for him? Or would he hold her? Allow what he had always deemed as a weakness, sentiment, and open himself to her? She honestly had no idea.

"I guess this side is ok?” She asked.

She'd barely turned to ensure that it was acceptable when she was pressed against the wall. She
gasped in surprise as her senses were suddenly overwhelmed by the scent of the expensive aftershave Mycroft frequently used, the leather of the ancient books he loved to read, and something that was uniquely him. His lips descended on hers, almost soft but determined. Jo gasped in surprise at his dominance and he took it as a sign of submission and his tongue darted in in a move to conquer her. One of his warm hands moved down to grip her shoulder while the other gripped her hip to pull her lower body towards himself. He was pouring everything he felt into this kiss.

Her own hands moved and one gripped his shoulder, whether to push away or pull him closer she didn't know but her other reached up to the nape of his neck. Sparse auburn hairs tickled her palm and she gripped him hard, twisting his head to a better angle to kiss him. She fought for control and couldn't help but enjoy the small battle. He growled at her fight and his fingers tightened almost in a pleasurably painful grip on her hip and Jo smirked against his lips as she deepened her kiss.

They'd never gone further than kissing, the older man almost behaving in an old fashioned manner as he 'courted' her and she wondered just what it would be like to be with him. Would it be this wonderful fight for dominance? A constant fight and one of them winning small battles but enjoying the long war? Joanne desperately hoped so. It had been so long since she had had someone that equaled her passion but she also hoped for gentle and sweet and she instinctively knew that he would be that person for her, giving her what they would both want and need.

When the need for air forced them apart, she leaned back and saw him, his hair disheveled and his face flushed. It was almost like he'd pushed everything into that moment. There was desperation, fear, affection, worry, and more care than she'd ever experienced from another partner. He'd never been so focused on just her and it had to be that his many responsibilities had been put on a short hold to focus on his family, both the people that were here and the two that were to be joining them in four and a half months. It was like that kiss had been a sort of promise that he would always be there for her and stand by her side through whatever it was that was causing him such worry. It was a way of telling her without saying a word and she understood completely.

Fingers drifted gently from their hold on her hip and settled on the curve of her belly, his palm resting proprietarily over the skin and it left a warm pleasant feeling that caused something to tighten in her. She lay her forehead on his shoulder and sighed.

"So, what was I asking?" Joanne joked and the answering rumble she felt in his chest as he chuckled made it worth it. She leaned back and took in his relaxed posture that seemed to have taken up residence now that they were alone and far away from their mutual responsibilities. At least figuratively her mind supplied. She hadn't failed to notice Mycroft's work laptop in the briefcase he carried nor had he likely noticed her loaded weapon in her suitcase.

Something was up and she didn't like being out of the loop but she was going to let the matter lie for now. Their mutual focus needed to be on family and if it became a problem then they'd have words but, for now, it would hold.

He leaned back, his visage serious and he met her eyes. This close she could see that he looked tired. How had she missed it? His skin was pale and she could see the beginnings of bags underneath his eyes. There was a line between his eyebrows that showed he'd been frowning far too much and she didn't like it. It made her worry but until he told her about it she doubted that she'd find out. She knew Sherlock was in on it and she couldn't help but trust them, both of them.

He swallowed and leaned forward to press his forehead to hers. "I want you to know you are more important to me than you realize. I lo-care about you and I want you to know that."

It stung that he didn't say the word but she didn't need him to. After all, she hadn't said it, yet, either. She had always been a firm believer that actions speak far louder than words so she didn't mention
the slip. Instead, she placed her palm against his cheek, feeling the soft stubble and enjoyed the fact that she saw him subtly lean into her touch. She didn't need the words said to her. Maybe some day he'd feel comfortable enough to say them and confide in her but what he was giving her now was more than enough.

"I know, Mycroft. I know."

xXx

When they made it downstairs, Sherlock eyed them with a raised brow and knowing look that made her roll her eyes and her face burn in slight embarrassment. "Oh, piss off." She murmured quietly with a level of fondness she always reserved for him. He just smirked and went back to a book that he was reading by the fireplace that had a small fire crackling merrily in the grate.

Mrs. Holmes came out of the kitchen and was wiping her hands on a tea towel when they joined the family. Her happiness at seeing everyone together was such a palpable thing that she could practically feel as something physical. "I'm just starting tea for us all and would appreciate a bit of help."

Immediately, Joanne moved towards the woman but she turned her attention to the pregnant blonde. "Oh, no you don't. You have a seat and rest. I'll bring you something warm to drink in a moment. The boys can help me in the kitchen."

Sherlock's expression was incredulous and looked as if she had practically asked him to navigate the most complicated task in the world while Mycroft appeared baffled and it made her lips quirk in amusement. She had never seen either man in a kitchen prepare anything more than a slice of toast and had a feeling that it was going to be quite an entertaining task of them actually preparing real food. She was definitely going to regret missing that show as a spectator.

Both men sulked as they followed their mum into the kitchen, moving as if they were being taken to the gallows which left her alone with Mr. Holmes. She'd never been alone with Holmes senior and wasn't sure about the etiquette involved with such an instance so she slowly moved about the room, curious at evidence of Sherlock's and Mycroft's youth and time before she'd met them.

She noticed a bookshelf with multiple antique books in leather bindings of poetry, plays by various writers, and classic novels. There were science books, some dedicated to mathematics, and so many others even in different languages that she couldn't even hope to understand. All of the Holmeses seemed to be very learned and it made her feel rather out of her depth despite her own advanced education and degrees.

A newer tome caught her attention and she carefully extracted it. ‘The science of combustion’ by M.L.Holmes.

"Ah, yes. Interesting choice. My wife was a mathematician in a previous life." Joanne looked up in surprise to see Mr. Holmes watching her with a curious look. She hadn't known what to expect their mother's career to have been but mathematics hadn't been one of them. Perhaps the sciences or politics but not mathematics. It just seemed...out of character consider both of their son's professions.

"I was an English Literature professor.” The elder Holmes continued.

Curiosity at the vast differences in career choices made her wonder just how the two had met. He looked at her knowingly, sharp but with kind gray eyes accurately deducing her question before she could voice it.
Sighing, he smiled wistfully, gesturing to the many pictures on the mantle piece. “We met at university. She was running to class and ran right into me because her nose was stuck in a book trying to figure out some overcomplicated equation.” He chuckled and lifted a picture to show her. "The moment I saw her I knew she was the one I wanted to spend the rest of my life with but she had other ideas. It took a while to 'woo' her but it was worth it.” George Holmes whispered conspiratorially. "And she was unbelievably hot."

Joanne chuckled at the sweet sentiment and focused on the picture. It was a candid of the two of them laughing and sitting under an old oak tree. Mr. Holmes's hair was a dark ebony while Mrs. Holmes had vivid, long, auburn hair the same shade as her eldest son. While Mrs. Holmes wore an almost formal outfit of a blouse and a pencil skirt, the older man was wearing a ridiculous ensemble of bell bottom jeans and a long tunic with a suede vest. "Nice outfits," Jo murmurs and Mr. Holmes threw back his head, laughing at her cheek.

"That was the height of fashion back then."

Jo carefully replaced the picture and moved on to the next one. A wedding portrait of Mr. and Mrs. Holmes standing in front of a modest church. It was only due to her skills and medical knowledge that she could see the telltale curve to the woman's abdomen hidden by the beautiful white dress but they both looked so happy as they posed for the picture. It brought a smile to her face at the sight.

The next few pictures showed a small red haired child with chubby cheeks and a carefree smile on his face. What had happened to Mycroft to change him from such a happy child to the serious man she knew now?

“He was always such a happy child. So focused and gifted but he had started to change once he and Sherlock went to school.”

Joanne frowned and looked away from the pictures. George Holmes had a far away look on his face and she could see regret etched in every line.

“What happened?”

He sighed and indicated they sit. “They were singled out. Sherlock more than Mycroft. It was during Sherlock’s second year at the local comprehensive. Lydia had wanted the boys to be able to stay close and have the experiences of a regular childhood and who was I to argue?” His features darkened and Jo felt a sense of foreboding at what he might say next.

“Three year eleven boys jumped Sherlock on the way home from school. They’d gotten angry at his deductions of their character. Mycroft saw the attack and tried to help.”

He swallowed hard and his hand gripped into a tight fist on his knee. She felt sick at the thought of someone hurting her best friend, especially when he was so young and vulnerable. Was that why Sherlock had taken so long to let her in? Joanne remembered when she’d first looked at the flat to consider moving in with him. He’d been so nervous and unsure, fluttering about and picking up papers and knickknacks, trying to reassure her that he’d fix things just to keep her and maybe even become a friend to her.

Jo carefully reached across and lay her hand atop his fist and was rewarded with her efforts at support when he turned his hand and gripped her smaller hand in his. It seemed to give him the strength to continue.

“Mycroft tried to fight them off but they’d already done so much damage. Sherlock had suffered a fractured skull and had to be in hospital a week. Mycroft had gotten a broken arm and nose in the
fight.” He squeezed her hand tight and Jo squeezed back.

“After that, Lydia and I moved the boys to private school but Mycroft was never the same. He became almost cold to the world, even to us.” His eyes were shining slightly and she could see the heartbreak and guilt brimming beneath the surface despite it not being his fault. “I think he blamed us.”

Her heart broke at the knowledge that both of the Holmes men had experienced such cruelty at so young of an age. She’d seen cruel words flung at Sherlock and it had incensed her to no end but Sherlock had always been able to fight back. He’d been defenseless back then. Clearly it had been a skill acquired through years of cruelty at the hands of fellow students.

She now understood a little more of the puzzle that was Mycroft as well. She’d always known he was overprotective when it came to his little brother but now it made even more sense than before. Maybe there was also a sense of guilt stemming from that tragic day that he’d been powerless to stop his brother from getting so hurt. Maybe that was part of why he sought power so that he’d never be in a position like that ever again. She also wondered if a part of that behavior had transferred to her. If so then that would mean that he cared about her so much.

Oblivious to Joanne’s musings, George Holmes patted her hand with his free one. “He’s different around you though. Been different since you’ve become his friend and especially lately.”

Joanne looked up from their joined hands to gray eyes that seemed so open, so happy, and so hopeful that it caused a lump of emotion to lodge in her throat. “I’m nobody special.”

He raised a finger to admonish her. “Ah, that’s where you’re wrong. This Christmas gathering alone proves that.” The elder Holmes grew serious. “Did you know that this is the first time in a decade since Sherlock and Mycroft have spent with us as a family? Not only that but this is also the first time that they have ever brought home someone? And they wouldn’t do that if you weren’t somebody to them, somebody important.” He didn’t release her hand which kept her attention focused on him. "You are the force that is bringing this family together. They've been different since you first appeared in their lives even before you became pregnant. You've brought a peace to this family that hasn't been seen in a long time. To see my children become close again and close with us makes me very happy. You make them better men, good men and I admire you and thank you for that."

Joanne smiled at that but feels disquieted at his words. "I don't want to change who they are, though. It's because of who they are that I care about them to the degree that I do. They're perfect as they are."

He chuckles quietly and smirks at her. "Oh, no. You never need to worry about that, my dear. That's like moving a mountain, impossible and futile. They're still the same men they have always been. You've simply brought out what was always beneath the surface. They needed that. It only makes them stronger."

She mulled over his words and considered them carefully. She'd always been an optimist, choosing to see the good in every person and even though she'd been ridiculed by many, she had continued to do so.

"So, how are things going between you and my eldest son?"

Joanne jerked back to the present and her face warmed in embarrassment. "It's-ah-I-" She swallowed around her discomfort and pulled her hand back. "It's...different. You do know I didn't really get pregnant in the-uh-traditional way..." She trailed off at his nod.
"Yes. I do know but I don't think it matters how it came to be. What is important is how things go from there." He fixed her with a penetrating look gauging her reactions to him. "I would never force something upon you but I can always hope for certain things. A father only wants the best for his son and I think that may be you so, please, at least keep our conversation in mind."

Relief flooded her and she nodded her head gratefully. "I will, sir."

Barking a laugh, he stood and gripped her shoulder. "None of this 'sir' nonsense. It's George."

"George." She corrected herself.
Chapter 17

Chapter Notes

Hi! Now, this chapter is a bit of a break from the negativity and a bit fluffy. It also is more 'adult' so I'm having to change the rating to M. I'm not sure if I got the character's behaviors quite right so it may change depending on if it's not well received.
Now, this chapter was a huge challenge for me because of the interpersonal relationships between all of the characters, most notably the parents. I didn't want Jo to be too 'girly' but, at the same time, it's kind of necessary for certain parts. I only hope I pulled it off.
Next chapter will bring us back to the drama unfolding in London. ;)

DarkWaters

Chapter Seventeen

Christmas morning, early enough that it was still dark out, but there was a warmth in front of him that he couldn't help but hold on to. Joanne shifted in his arms and sighed in her sleep. He belatedly realized how close he was to her, his front to her back. He breathed deep, savoring the scent of apples and warm tea that seemed to make up what she was. He held her close, allowing himself this moment that no-one else would see or know about, to lock it safely away in his mind to never forget.

His hands drifted over the soft fabric covering her and she shifted back in his arms, still asleep and Mycroft hummed in happiness. He enjoyed this feeling of closeness. It had been so long since he had felt this with another person. His arm may be falling asleep under her head but he didn't care. He may not have known how they had come to be this close together in bed but he wanted it. He wanted it more than he had ever thought he would have and he hoped it would become a more frequent thing as time passed. It was strange. He had spent more than half of his life eschewing such things as sentiment but it seemed that it had been there all along, Joanne simply brought it to the surface.

His free hand moved under the blanket, possessively running over the swell of her belly. The proof of his children growing inside of her caused a feeling of protectiveness to rear up in him that surprised the older Holmes. It only seemed to enhance her beauty rather than detract from it as she seemed to believe. She was stronger as she was learning the new dynamics that it created and it made him respect her all the more. He would never let anything happen to the three of them if he could help it and he most certainly could. His position and level of power that he had carefully cultivated over the many years he had been an adult, and even when he had been a young teenager, made this possible.

The threat against her that Joanne was ignorant of and would remain so; if he had any say in the matter, for her own health and safety. She was one of the strongest and most independent women he knew and he respected her for that but current circumstances necessitated the use of careful manipulation and subterfuge. It was a frequent skill that both he and his younger brother frequently utilized and, even though Joanne would balk at the careful treatment, it had to be so for her own wellbeing.

His gray eyes scanned over her features and took note of the changes that had taken place over the
last twenty-four hours alone. Gone were the dark circles under her eyes and pale coloring that had been a source of concern for him. In their place, her cheeks had a healthy flush to them and she looked well-rested. Clearly, this trip and his mother's devoted care had been effective.

Another bonus that Mycroft had noticed was that the nightmares that frequently plagued the blonde had been absent that night as she had lain in his arms. He would like to think that it was because she had felt safe and secure in his hold but he had a feeling that she wasn't one to rely on that fact alone. She was far too self-sufficient to have the need or want of another's protection even when she needed it and he decided that it was currently very much needed.

Joanne shifted in her sleep, her hips pressing back against him and his growing problem. Mycroft's fingers twitched and he grit his teeth in frustration. That was another issue that he was internally struggling with. As the pair spent more time together in a romantic setting, his attraction to her had only grown. Watching her, especially as she grew with his children inside and her body changing, only made the situation more difficult.

He never thought that he would be attracted to the physical aspects of pregnancy. It was almost a primal behavior that simmered beneath the civilized, cold veneer that was his trademark front shown to the public eye. It wasn't just that he found enticing. There were just too many things to count about her that made him want her all the more.

Her body pressed further back and he hissed in response as she rubbed against him and he grew harder at the stimulation. Why had he allowed this position to happen? Resting his forehead on the nape of her neck, he struggled to control his body's baser reactions, but it was rapidly turning into exercise in futility. She was just too tempting.

His nose trailed up the back of her neck, his lips following as he pressed kisses to the soft, delicate skin. He felt her shiver in response. Mouthing at the curve where her shoulder met neck, he also slipped his hand under her nightshirt. Fingertips enjoyed the feel of the taut skin and his hips thrust involuntarily against her backside.

Being here far away from the worries and stresses of the past month, at least physically, he indulged himself. He hadn't felt something like this in years. Maybe he had since he'd first met her when he'd seen such defiance and strength. Her kindness and sense of morality mixed with such unwavering loyalty had in equal parts intrigued and fascinated him but he had liked it. Perhaps that had been part of why he had frequently requested her presence. Maybe he had unconsciously coveted her and felt more than simple affection for the good doctor.

"Somebody's awake early." Joanne's voice was rough with sleep but filled with humor. Mycroft only hummed in response and continued his gentle assault on the back of her neck and shoulder, his palm stroking upwards and finding her breasts. God, it had been so long. So long since he'd done something like this and he'd been wanting to do this with her.

Her breasts were soft and full. They had also increased in size to accommodate her changing body. Joanne's chest arched into his touch and she moaned in pleasure. Spinning in his arms, she threw a leg over his hip and proceeded to kiss him. Her tongue sought his as she plundered his mouth and he let her take control there while he brushed a thumb over a hardening nipple. Her hips jerked towards his hardness in response and she only kissed harder.

The sexual tension between the two was tight enough to snap and his heart sped up in anticipation of finally having her and her having him. Her hand reached between them and brushed against his penis and he jerked, searching for much wanted friction. He used the arm under her to pull her closer while he moved his other downwards just skirting the edge of her waistband.
Her own mirrored his but went all the way into his pants and he gasped into her mouth as she held him, her hand slowly pumping up and down. "Oh, God, Joanne!"

She chuckled in response and he felt tightening sensation as pleasure started to flood his senses. A flick of her wrist and his grip on her grew harder. He kissed her harder and she moved faster and increased the pressure on his member, occasionally rolling his balls as if she was testing their weight. It felt amazing.

He suddenly realized that Joanne was seizing control. He was helpless with that one hand of hers. With one touch she owned him completely. She pulled her hand out and sat up over him, bright blue eyes full of mischievousness and lust and pulled off her nightshirt, exposing herself to him.

She was magnificent. Milky white skin covered lean strong muscles reminding Mycroft of delicate porcelain. Rounded firm breasts that begged to be worshipped were in front of him. His eyes roved hungrily over the flesh exposed to him without shame or fear.

It was when he saw the star shaped scar on her shoulder that he stopped. It was like a bucket of ice water had been dumped on him, leaving him cold and extinguishing all the fire of passion that had been there just seconds before. It reminded him that she had been hurt before and that she had been threatened. His head lowered and it only compounded his feelings, reminding him just how vulnerable she was. All of his previous worries came to the forefront of his mind and his erection wilted.

Dr. Thomlinson's words of warning about her fragility during a multiples pregnancy hit him hard and he closed his eyes swallowing hard. How could he have been so stupid? He'd let his baser instincts dictate his behavior. His focus needed to both be on Joanne's health and eliminating the threat against her. Now wasn't the time for this. What if he hurt her? What if she was killed either by this unknown person or himself because he had allowed this moment of selfishness?

Joanne must have sensed the change in the atmosphere because she sat back and away from him. The space next to him was suddenly very cold without her there. Mycroft opened his eyes and saw hurt reflected back. Summer blue had become cloudy at his rejection.

He forced another swallow. "We can't."

Joanne quickly pulled on her gray shirt and her hand went to her left shoulder as if by covering it he would not know of it's existence. "Mycroft, what's wrong?" Frowning, her eyes searched his desperately seeking an answer. "Is it my scar? Is that what it is?"

His mouth opened and closed and he couldn't seem to find the right words. At his silence, her hurt started to morph into disappointment. Joanne shook her head and laughed without humor. As she turned her face away her head dropped and tousled blond hair covered her, hiding her away from him. "I can't believe I was stupid enough to think you'd ever really want me."

Things were rapidly falling apart. All of his careful work to win the doctor's heart were going up in flames.

"Wait-" He tried but Joanne simply shook her head and turned to place a hand on his shoulder. There was no anger, only understanding, but he could see just how upset she was.

"It's ok. I understand." A gentle squeeze and Watson started to get up. He had to stop her. He couldn't let her think he was disgusted with her for something so trivial as physical appearances. It was her he was attracted to. Did she truly think he was that fickle? If anything, her scar showed her devotion to causes she believed in and strength of character. It may have been a horrible event in her
life but if it hadn't happened then they likely would never have met.

His hand shot out and Mycroft grabbed her arm to still her. "It's not that."

Joanne frowned in confusion but she stayed. For that Mycroft was grateful. "Then what is it?" Her face suddenly twisted in sympathy as if she understood his reasons for stopping and her next words caused him to feel a level of mortification he had not experienced since he had been a teenager. "Oh, Mycroft. It's ok. It happens to every man at some point in their lives. Sometimes stress can cause this problem. Erectile disfun-"

Mycroft let go of her as if he'd been burned. "No! It's not that!" He said hotly.

"Then what is it?"

He could see that she was curious and was that a bit of relief he could see in her expression? "I-"
Running a hand through his hair, he sighed and shoved himself to a sitting position. He wouldn't have this conversation laying down. "I just think it might be better to wait."

Joanne's eyes narrowed in suspicion. "Wait for what?"

"It would be safer for you if we were to wait." He clarified.

"Safer." She repeated dully. "What do you mean by safer?" Crossing her arms, Joanne waited patiently for him to explain.

"Well, you're pregnant with twins."

Joanne snorted and gestured to her belly. "Pretty sure that's obvious by now, but what does that have to do with having sex?" She pointed between the two of them. "I wanted it and I'm pretty sure you wanted it going by how you were acting."

Sometimes he wondered if Joanne was acting deliberately obtuse to mess with him, but this time it seemed she genuinely didn't know what the problem was. "Right now, you're very fragile and-"

He didn't even get a chance to continue. "Unbelievable! Are you bloody kidding me?"

He spoke over her, determined to gain back control. She had to understand. "-and a pregnancy such as yours carries risks."

"I can't believe that I'm gonna suffer because of the female equivalent of blue-balls." She muttered and took a deep breath. "People have been having sex while pregnant for millennia and it's perfectly safe. It's not like they're gonna come out with dents on their heads from a little sex. I'm a doctor and I know it's safe plus I think I know my body."

"I just think it's safer to wait until after. I don't want you to get hurt."

He could see Joanne's jaw work as she grit her teeth. "Unless there's something you're not telling me, it won't hurt me."

Mycroft put his foot down. "I'm sorry, Joanne. Truly I am, but we can't." His resolve firmed and he would not allow her to come to harm no matter what he wanted. She was so tempting.

Her expression turned to one of disappointment. "I don't like this overprotective behavior though nor do I appreciate you dictating what I can and cannot do. I'm pretty sure that I've proven over the past several years that I can handle myself. If this thing between us is to work the you have to trust my
opinions on certain things." She smiled smugly and it seemed full of devious promise. "However, if you want to believe that I'm going to break at the slightest touch I'll let you enjoy your misguided chivalry, but I'm pretty sure you won't."

xXx

Christmas morning dawned bright and cold but there was a comfortable warmth that seemed to encompass the Holmes household. It was a surreal experience being with family on Christmas. He had never been one for the sentiment attached to the event. The last one he had spent working but it had been interrupted by the delivery of a small package from Watson. A small leather-bound diary stamped with the initials M.H. and an antique fountain pen. It was nothing particularly special, but the simple gift had surprised him and he had actually enjoyed the sentiment behind it.

The room they were currently in was festively decorated. A large tree adorned with multicolored baubles, a few clearly homemade by small hands, dominated a corner. Blinking fairy-lights only added to the peaceful and happy atmosphere. Mrs. Holmes-no-Lydia was excitedly showing yet more pictures of her two boys. It was a touch disconcerting and reminiscent of a scene that a future mother-in-law would do; showing baby pictures to a prospective daughter-in-law.

In the background, both Sherlock and Mycroft glaring at their mother as she continued in her task. A picture caught her attention. Both Holmes boys were standing with their father in ice-skates on a frozen lake. While Mycroft looked smug and sure, a young Sherlock looked both terrified and was clearly fuming as he clung to Mr. Holmes. Mycroft moved to look over the women's shoulders to see what they were looking at and his lips turned down in a moue of displeasure.

"Oh, yes. Poor Sherlock just didn't take well to the ice. I was surprised since he was such an accomplished dancer." Lydia commented.

Joanne looked up and raised a brow in question to the youngest Holmes who rolled his eyes. "Yes, mummy had me take dance lessons."

"That's so cute." She cooed and Sherlock rolled his eyes in irritation while Lydia continued with her narrative.

"Mike-"

Sherlock snorted and there was an irritated sigh from her side by the auburn-haired man. "Mycroft is the name you gave me, mummy. If you could possibly struggle through to the end..."

Lydia ignored him, likely used to the teenager-like behavior. "Now, Mike was an excellent skater. He actually took figure-skating lessons and won first place in a few competitions."

Joanne snorted inelegantly and turned towards him and whispered low enough that his mother didn't hear. "Is that where the moniker 'Ice-Man' came from?"

"Hardly."

Sherlock chimed in. "Well, I personally have an opinion as to why Mycroft was so skilled. We all know mammals that do well or live in icy climates are only good because of the layers of blubber they have."

"Sherlock!" Mrs. Holmes scolded.
Moving away, Mycroft went to retrieve his laptop to finish a few reports while his family was distracted only to find it under a cutting board with potatoes. How had he even allowed this whole thing to happen with his parents? He certainly had never celebrated Christmas during his adulthood.

"Oh, is that your laptop?"

He looked up to see his father finishing pouring batter into a pan for Yorkshire puddings seemingly indifferent to the importance of this piece of technology. "Yes. Upon which depends the security of the free world and you've got potatoes on it."

"Well, perhaps if it's that important you shouldn't leave it laying around. Anyway, it's hardly the time to be working when this is a day that you should be focusing on family." He chided. "The one that's here-" He indicated Joanne with a not-so-subtle hint. "-and the one that's to come."

Strong dedication to his work and the investigation into the threats against Joanne warred with the wisdom of his father's words. It was only the fact that the work he needed to complete was not pressing yet and that his leads into who was responsible for the Baker Street incident had proven unsuccessful that he carefully put away his laptop and joined the rest of his family. Joanne was talking with mummy who was indicating the stack of children's board games in the corner. Ludo, snakes and ladders, cleudo, and various other games were neatly put away but covered with a fine layer of dust showing just how long it had been since they had been used. George Holmes joined the trio, drying his hands on a towel and clearly interested in the goings-on of the conversation.

"Oh, yes. We couldn't have more cerebral games like chess. The fights between these two were horrendous! They were just too competitive."

"That I can believe." The pregnant blonde agreed, laughing and clearly imagining them as children.

"That's because Sherlock was always such a sore loser." Mycroft added.

"Mycroft cheated." He argued back.

"I followed the rules of the game and you were always slow on the uptake." He smiled at Sherlock's behavior which only seemed to irritate his younger brother. "Besides, I know that cleudo is banned in Baker Street due to your inability to-"

"The rules were wrong."

Rolling his eyes, he sat next to his girlfriend? Partner? He had yet to define just what they were, but he knew that he wanted them to be more. "The victim cannot possibly be the murderer."

George clapped his hands, effectively ending the argument. "Presents! We have a bit of time before dinner."

Lydia went to the tree and started sorted the small pile, handing the first one to Joanne who took it hesitantly.

"Now, this one is from Mikey-"

Sherlock snorted a laugh.

She carefully opened the small package. Her fingers moved slowly and he could see that she wasn't used to receiving gifts which made him consider that maybe this needed to be a more frequent occurrence. The cracks in the walls he'd surrounded his heart with started to grow more numerous the more time he spent in her presence.
"Oh, Mycroft, it's beautiful." Jo looked surprised but she seemed happy with his gift to her. A simple white gold chain held a circular sapphire that shone in the light as she held it. It wasn't ornate but it seemed to suit her. Mycroft felt that the blue sparkle of the precious stone was a pale imitation of the azure color of her eyes.

She held the necklace out to him, the invitation clear and he carefully took it to place it around her neck. She pulled her hair aside to expose her neck and he couldn't help but brush his fingers against the soft skin as he closed the clasp. She fingered the stone and her smile lit up the room and caused a pleasant warmth in his chest.

Leaning back, Sherlock leaned in close to whisper. "Tracking device, brother? How utterly predictable."

"You wound me." He sniffed, but he quickly grew serious. "However, while the gem is real, you are correct in your assumption that there is more to it than meets the eye."

The rest of the gift opening went on for what seemed like hours. While the gifts to his parents were rather tame and predictable, Sherlock's gift from Watson and the Yard sent an amusing shockwave through the group. He'd received a two-day pass to a body farm to be able to have the experience of seeing different modes of death that he may have not seen before with bodies donated to forensic science. Sherlock had gifted his best friend with a 1st edition copy of 'Grey's Anatomy' to replace the cheap one he'd thrown in the fireplace when he'd been bored over the summer.

It wasn't until after dinner that Jo approached him privately with a small wrapped gift. This surprised him as he'd already received a rather handsome tie pin and an antique novel that he had been considering purchasing for himself not that long ago.

She held out the gift, hesitancy showing in the tense lines of her body. "Now, this isn't really a Christmas gift per-se, but I wanted you to have it."

He accepted it from her and he could see that Jo was nervous if the fiddling of the edge of her jumper was anything to go by. "It's nothing fancy and I understand if you don't want it."

He could instantly tell it was a book. It was thinner than that of a novel or play. Judging by Joanne's behavior, it was something that was important to her.

"I know you're not one for public displays of sentiment and affection so I wanted to wait until we were alone to give it to you." She added.

He tore the bright red paper and raised a brow in surprise. It was a forest green, antique book.

"It's sort of more of a gift to the children when they're old enough but I want you to be the one to read it to them if you wanted."

Gold lettering lined the well-used spine and there was a picture of a small child holding a fishing rod with a bear sitting across from him embossed in gold. A 1926 first edition Winnie The Pooh book. It was clearly a much loved tome that had been passed down rather than simply purchased.

"It was my great-grandmother's. She gave it to my gran who gave it to my mum and then I got it when she passed."

He was speechless. Here was Joanne Watson, giving him a chance to easily find a way to bond with their children. She had to have known that it was a concern of his. His time with them would always be limited due to his duties and he wasn't the most eloquent of speakers when it came to matters of the heart. She was offering a piece of herself, yet again, to him. She was trusting him with a part of
her history and giving him a chance at their future.

When no words were forthcoming, she started to frown, unsure of the reception that she was receiving. "My mum used to read it to me when I was little and I thought that maybe you could..." She trailed off and shrugged.

"I shall treasure it as will our children." He told her sincerely. "Thank you." His voice was rough with emotion and he quickly pulled her to him, pressing a chaste kiss on her lips and rested his forehead against hers. The scent of apples and warm tea that he associated with the doctor and he inhaled deeper to imprint everything so it would never leave him.
Chapter 18

Chapter Notes

Hi everyone!
Well, we're starting to get back to the drama and I wanted to give a bit of background info in regards to the current baddie. :)
I can't wait til I get writing the next chapter but, there's a lot of drama going on in my personal life. I mentioned before that I had a court case where we were in the middle of suing my daughter's school district. Well, they just won't settle despite there being video evidence of them breaking her neck. It's been 2 1/2 years! Gah! Now, we're having to undergo ridiculous "Interrogatories" which means I have to write long, painful statements and provide, yet more, evidence including my personal emails, texts, etc. Hope they like reading my AO3 stories. Lol!
Anyway, hope all is well with everyone and I hope this chapter is liked! ;)

DarkWaters

Chapter Eighteen

The past week had been the most trying she had had since she'd first found out she was carrying Mycroft Holmes's children. She knew something was being kept from her but she couldn't figure out what. Both Holmes men were being evasive and unusually accommodating which was weird in and of itself but, she'd noticed her shifts in the A&E had been significantly cut. She'd also been relegated to clinic duty for the bulk of her working time. It was boring but manageable. Jo decided to let it go. For now. Eventually, they'd figure out that they were being ridiculous and Sherlock would get bored with it.

New Year's Eve had also been rather uneventful. Mycroft had been out of the country so it had just been a quiet night in. Even Sherlock had opted to stay in. It had been pleasant especially, when she'd been gifted with Sherlock playing a rendition of "Auld Lang Syne". It had been a long time since she'd heard him play and it was as lovely as she remembered.

The last of the holidays she'd spent with the Holmeses had been less trying than she'd thought it would be. Jo didn't get just why the pair of them stayed so far away emotionally from them but, she supposed it was their way. They did tend to be a little overbearing but, they were inherently good people. All of them. It was like Sherlock's reaction to Mrs. Hudson at times. He loved very much. Almost too much and Jo reasoned that it was actually fear of getting too close and being hurt. That, she could understand. Mycroft seemed to be cut from the same. cloth.

Maybe that was the real reason behind Mycroft's moratorium on sex. It stung that he thought she didn't know her own body well enough to gauge what she could and couldn't do. Since she'd hit the second trimester she'd been wanting a bit more than simple heavy petting. She was an adult woman for christ's sake and she certainly was no nun. It also felt like a bit of a weird situation to be carrying Mycroft's children and not even have had sex.

Plus, it hurt being rejected. She wasn't one to be ashamed of her body but it had almost seemed like the moment he'd seen her he'd retreated. Sure, there were things she didn't like about it but, she still felt rejected. Mycroft was still affectionate in as best as he could be considering his typical behavior.
which had been reassuring.

There were however, things that couldn't be dismissed mentally, though. She felt inadequate. The men she'd come to know over the past few years screamed old money and schools like Eton and posh upbringings. It was a far cry from her own youth where she went to the local Secondary school and spent her childhood playing in mud and tree-houses with skinned knees.

She wondered vaguely if Mycroft was planning on raising their kids in a similar manner or if they were gonna go for a mix. She truly hoped that he would compromise.

Straightening her white coat, Joanne grabbed the chart of her last patient of the night. A Mr. Norman Bastain with severe muscle spasms in his leg and moderate knee pain.

She entered the exam room to see a familiar blonde man with bulging muscles and gold eyes that seemed to track her every movement.

Jo frowned for a moment and then smiled nervously. When they'd parted ways it hadn't been a particularly pleasant experience.

“Sebastian?”

He returned her smile. “Well, if it isn’t Doctor Joanne Watson. What a coincidence.”

God. She hadn’t seen him for five years and he’d hardly changed a bit. Joanne's lips turned down slightly at the corners but she maintained a professional demeanor. She remembered the moment they’d met.

xXx Five Years Ago xXx

Joanne sat next to the blonde colonel and felt a painful sort of sympathy as she looked at the leg carefully supported with a pillow to keep his knee elevated. She’d never gone into orthopedics, preferring trauma surgery and the excitement that accompanied it. She almost regretted that choice as she looked at the overwhelming bandages that covered the man's knee.

She'd tried her best but she still felt like she'd failed despite saving the limb. The damage had been severe and Joanne knew that Moran was looking at a long recovery and a medical discharge. He'd likely never walk without a limp but he did stand a better chance of not doing so if he chose to get a joint replacement and follow up surgeries. Physio would be needed at any rate as well as a brace to stabilize the joint.

They'd nearly lost him. Watson had not felt so helpless as she had when she'd been forced to tie off the limb to stop the extreme blood loss. His blood had stained the red sand shining crimson as it had left his body. Another thirty minutes and Watson would have been forced to perform a field amputation in a last ditch effort to save the man's life. It had been close. Far too close.

"I'm not going back out there, am I?"

The hoarse voice startled her out of her morbid thoughts regarding Colonel Moran and she reached over to give him a sip of the cool water to soothe his throat.

"No." She told him, regret in her voice. "You're not."

Moran looked away and she could see his throat work as if he was trying to swallow the grief of losing this life away. She knew she would be the same if it ever happened to her.
"Leave." He snapped at her in a harsh voice and she did.

He would need time to grieve and accept what had happened. She might not have a PhD in psychiatry but she'd had to deliver news like this to enough of her fellow soldiers to know what he needed and right now that was time alone to process everything.

xXx

It was two days before he'd said another word to her other than the minimum of 'yes, it still hurt and no, I don't need another shot.' Watson was in the middle of changing the dressings and checking for infection when he looked at her. Really looked at her with those golden eyes that weren't currently filled with anger and resentment.

"You were there."

She lowered the limb. "Yes, I was." She told him carefully.

He turned away from her again and Joanne sighed in disappointment.

xXx

Joanne growled in irritation at the sight of Moran on the ground, cursing and clutching at his knee. He wasn't due to be sent back to London until he was deemed stable for transport and if he kept doing foolish things like this it'd be a lot longer of a wait. Didn't the stubborn idiot have any common sense?

She walked over to him with purposeful strides. Right now, she was Doctor Watson not the lower ranked Captain Watson. "Just what do you think you're doing, Colonel? Are you deliberately trying to lose that leg and undo all of the hard work the medical staff and I have done trying to save it?"

To her surprise, he cringed away and she let out a breath of regret at her tone. Kneeling down, she threw his arm around her shoulders and pulled the stubborn man up. Watson knew he needed the sense of independence he'd once had and calling a nurse or orderly to lift him and place him into a wheelchair for transport back to his bed would be far more damaging than what she was helping him to do.

Once she settled him down, she left to get an ice pack and a shot of morphine. The man may be adept at lying about his pain to other staff members but the Captain could read body language just as well as the body itself. The lines around his eyes and the tense set to his shoulders belied his words. He was silent as she placed the pack on his swollen knee and injected the pain medication into his IV port.

"It's not a weakness to accept help, Colonel." She murmured quietly. His head twitched in her direction slightly so she knew he'd heard her. "In fact, it's a strength."

Silence reigned.

xXx

Doctor Watson sipped her morning cup of tea as she headed over to the makeshift ward for rounds when she was nearly bowled over by Private Jenkins storming through the tent flaps covered in oatmeal. The orderly looked furious.

She flung out an arm to halt his progress. "What happened?"
Jenkins's dark skin flushed in anger but he forced himself to calm with considerable effort. "A breakfast disagreement."

Watson's eyes darted into the open tent flap and saw Moran glaring at nothing with his arms crossed. "Looks like it." Patting the young man on the back, she sighed. "I'll take care of it, Private."

"Yes, sir."

Spinning on her heel, she headed back to the mess tent and collected toast and her personal jar of apricot jam, two bowls of fruit, and a second cup of tea and made her way back into the med tent. Her superior, Major Lee gave her a curious look and Joanne nodded her head towards their joint problem patient. Moran had already been with them for far too long but, there had been a delay in troop transports back to the main hospital that was far from the front lines and then to London. The main road had been compromised and the risk was considered too great to use ground transport. The more critical patients had been sent ahead via chopper and, as much as she hated to think it, there wasn't much more that could be done with Moran's knee other than a full replacement. He was stable so they were stuck with him for another week until a new route to Kabul could safely be established.

A look of understanding dawned on Lee and he moved on to extend his shift until she could (hopefully) break through some of the man's stubbornness.

Placing her hoard on the bedside table she sat next to him but he remained still as a statue. He'd already scared off three of her best nurses, six orderlies, and no other doctor would talk with him or even try because they were simply met with an impenetrable brick wall.

She added a splash of milk to the second cup of tea and placed it on his side of the table and then started spreading jam on her toast. "I hate the oatmeal too. It tastes like sawdust."

Moran twitched slightly as she took a bite of her toast. Thank god Harry's wife sent her this jam in her last care package. That woman was a godsend. "I prefer toast in the mornings. It's portable, easy to eat one handed, and with Clara's jam it's amazing." She took another bite and looked around the ward, keeping the blonde in her sight but not directly.

She could see his eyes darting towards her in curiosity. "You're a bit small to be in the army."

Jo shrugged and started in on her second piece of toast. "I get that a lot. I was a preemie."

Moran snorted and a small smile appeared but it was quickly gone the moment his eyes drifted to his propped up and bandaged knee. Sighing, the colonel shifted and looked at her with suspicion. "Why are you here?"

"I'm eating breakfast and looked like you could use a friend." Shrugging, she sipped at her tea. "Besides, it's quieter here what with you not talking and all." She told him pointedly.

His answering bark of laughter forced her to hide her smile behind the rim of her mug as she continued to drink her tea. Joanne and Moran ate in comfortable silence.

xXx

She was exhausted. She'd had three major surgeries, two minor, and had been on her feet for sixteen hours. The ward was, once again filled with the injured and Joanne had missed tea time which meant a cold, unappetizing sandwich.
She was walking through the ward to give her patients one last look-over when Jo felt a set of eyes watching her. She stuttered to a halt in front of Moran’s cot. Two covered plates sat on his bedside table and he looked at her expectantly. She could smell the aroma of the sliced beef and mashed potatoes and she couldn’t help the smile that graced her face as she sat down in the visitor’s chair next to him.

“Figured I’d return the favor, Doc.” He grunted and dug into his food.

No more words were spoken but his actions were enough.

xXx

Watson swore an impressive string of curse words and her hand gripped her gun tighter than she knew she should. She squeezed the trigger and her lips thinned in irritation as the shot missed the red circle in the middle of the target and went far too wide and to the right.

"Your shooting is for shit."

Joanne lowered her head and gripped her weapon tighter. "What do you want, Moran? In case it's escaped your notice, I'm having a bad day and I can't handle your self-absorbed wallowing."

To her irritation, her fellow soldier looked unaffected by her words."Your bedside manner matches it, too, Doc."

She forced herself to regain control but failed miserably and turned to face the man who was currently sitting in a wheelchair behind her. "At least you get to go home to your family. Those men out there don't." She spat with as much vitriol as possible.

She rolled her eyes. "What do you want, Moran?"

His face softened in sympathy. "I heard about what happened today."

Joanne clenched her jaw and turned back around. Pulling the slide back, she took aim and fired three more shots, each missing the target and hitting the outside ring.

Hot, angry tears welled up and she had to work to fight them back but it only served to blur the world in front of her and her target as she held her weapon at the ready.

"It wasn't your fault." He murmured gently.

The words were the same as her commanding officer's and it felt patronizing. "Don't pander to me, Colonel. You're only embarrassing yourself."

A hand on her arm caused her to lower them. "I'm not pandering. If I was I'd be telling you everything is going to be alright."

She couldn't look at him. "You weren't there." She grit out.

"Maybe not but, I heard enough scuttlebutt to know what happened." He grunted as he shifted his stance. "You can't save everyone, Doctor."

Watson snorted in derision and glared at the Colonel’s knee to show the idiot he shouldn't be up despite the crutch he was using to steady himself.
“Don’t you think I know that?” She spat.

He shrugged, not looking bothered by her temper. "They knew what could happen when they signed up to serve Queen and Country and from what I heard you took out two of the rebels before back up arrived. You saved three men that might have died out there without your being there."

"And I lost two others before I hit the bastards." She bit back.

The Colonel hobbled to stand next to her and, sliding his hands to her elbows and lifting them up. Joanne let him and corrected her stance, re-aiming the browning at the practice target.

"Relax, Joanne, and clear your mind." His warm breath tickled the back of her neck and she could feel the heat from his body through her clothes.

With Moran watching her so intently it only increased her stress but she pushed it away, her focus on nothing but her goal.

"Good. Now, aim and exhale as you pull the trigger."

She let out a deep breath and squeezed, hitting the target right in the bull's-eye.

He pulled back, satisfied at the results. "Perfect. You were overthinking it. I saw you shoot the day you saved my sorry arse and you're one of the best I've seen in a long time."

The muscled blonde cocked his hip to remove the extra weight in his leg. “I’d like to have dinner with you.”

Moran paused and Watson had a sense of foreboding. “As a date.” And the other shoe dropped.

Joanne grimaced in sympathy for the man. She'd been trying to help him as a doctor and a friend but her good intentions had clearly been misinterpreted. She'd seen it before but, had never had it directed at her.

Erotomania. It wasn’t a common thing to happen but, it did. Sometimes, a patient had the belief that a caregiver cares more than they actually did beyond the scope of the job and had a mutual interest that ran deep enough to be considered love. That caregiver could be anything from a teacher to a nurse or even to a doctor. The patient can become so delusional that they would see themselves even going so far as having a life with them. While she cared deeply for every patient, that was the extent of it.

Jo winced in empathy. "Look, Sebastian, I'm sorry if I misled you but-"

An ugly look crossed Moran's face and it caused her to shrink back slightly. She was almost grateful she had a gun because he looked dangerous, almost like he was a feral animal ready to attack. "I understand completely, Doctor, but you're making a huge mistake." He told her in a harsh, dark tone and she unconsciously shivered.

She didn't even get a chance to finish before he was gone and the blond made a note to have him on the first transport out in the morning regardless of whether he needed urgent treatment or not.

**xXxPresent timexXx**

She carefully palpated the joint and gently checked the range of motion, noting that there was no brace and that the scarring indicated nothing had been done since she'd performed his surgery back in Afghanistan. Muscles jumped and twitched under her fingers and the knee itself was swollen with overuse. He'd clearly been very active lately and not too careful with protecting the war injury.
"Do you have a brace?"

He shrugged and winced as she hit a particularly tender spot. "No."

Joanne's lips thinned in disapproval and she turned to the store cupboard to get a brace for him. With her back turned to him his eyes burned a hole in the back of her head. She hated it but she didn't feel scared. She probably should be but with his current condition he wasn't a big threat.

Returning to the former soldier, she strapped on the support with quick and efficient motions. "Now, I think this will help but I want you to take it easy. A visit to an orthopedic surgeon would be appropriate and you need to consider a knee replacement which would give you better function."

"Looks like I'm a little late."

"What are you talking about?" Joanne stiffened and stood up. Moran's eyes were dark and focused on her belly where her children were growing. A sick feeling of fear started to build and she wanted to run but she'd be damned if she showed it. She'd never run from a damn thing in her life but, she supposed it was an hormonal instinct like that of more primitive mammals. She didn't like it but she couldn't fault it. As Sherlock would say, 'It is an instinct borne of the will to perpetuate the species and ensure survivability'. "Sebastian, it was inappropriate and I could never have started a romantic relationship with you. I was your doctor and I'd like to think I could have been a friend."

Pulling out her prescription pad, she made the mistake of not keeping her eyes on him and a hand shot out, gripping her wrist in an iron hold. Joanne clenched her teeth as the delicate bones ground together. He was playing a dangerous game. She could easily break his grasp, and probably his wrist, even with being pregnant. She knew his weak points that could hurt the him but she held still, waiting and forcing a sense of calm to not react.

"I'd suggest you let go, Moran, unless you want to have to contact the orthopedic surgeon about your hand as well as your knee." She forced out in the calmest, most dangerous tone she could manage.

He glared but there was a glint of approval at her defiance in those cold eyes. Moran squeezed hard one last time before dropping the limb and she breathed a sigh of relief. "I'm going to prescribe some 500mg of methocarbamol and some paracetamol with codeine to manage the discomfort but I want you to take it easy on that knee."

She scrawled the prescription and handed it to him which he took as he brushed his fingers against hers. Joanne didn't wait for a reply and she left the exam room, eager to put the incident behind her but it still weighed on her mind as she massaged the sore joint and focus on her upcoming date with Mycroft.
Chapter Nineteen

Mycroft returned home, guilt suffusing him and creating a heavy feeling in his chest. He and Joanne were supposed to have gone out to the opera. La Traviata was a favorite of his and he'd hoped to share it with the woman who was rapidly becoming a permanent fixture in his heart.

He'd been forced to cancel their date due to a coup taking place in a small, insignificant country but, it had still required supervision due to the political aspects that could affect neighboring countries.

He sighed as he unlocked the door to his home and froze in the middle of loosening his tie. The scent of apples tickled his nose and he couldn't help but smile at the knowledge that Joanne had opted to wait for him and at his home no less. He could see her boots next to the door and her own coat hanging next to where he'd be placing his.

The elder Holmes hung his coat on the hook next to the front door and walked in to a sight that was very welcome indeed. Joanne was laying on the sofa in the living room, a thin pajama top that only served to put her pregnancy on display made her more beautiful than he had ever thought possible. Her pajama bottoms had slipped low on her hips and the top had slid up to where several inches of skin were revealed. The throw blanket she had been using had fallen to the ground and the television was on low, it's lights casting an eerie glow over her skin.

He picked up the throw and covered her to keep her warm. She'd finally started putting on an adequate amount of weight and was beginning to round out in the way that pregnant women tended to. She was laying in her right side, arm tucked under a pillow and she looked so young in sleep. How many times had he seen her like this? Definitely not enough.

Their time lately had been limited due to conflicting schedules and, as a result, he had not been able to attend the last few obstetrics appointments. He had yet to see an ultrasound of their children in person. Joanne, in a display of sentiment, refused to be told the genders of the children until they were both there. While Mycroft didn't understand the reason why, he did appreciate it. Sherlock and his parents, however, did not much to his and Joanne's unending amusement.

He'd never thought that he'd be attracted to another person after Carol but, Joanne Watson seemed to be the exception. Since he'd first met her, he'd found her...fascinating. He well remembered his first touch of her delicate skin when he'd gripped her hand and turned it to show her the truth of his statement that she missed the war. It had been such a contradiction to what he had thought of her appearance that it had surprised him.

He decided to text his brother despite the fact he loathed the act.

-"Joanne is here. Is there a reason why? MH"

Sherlock's response was quicker than he expected.
"She did not react well to my latest foray into testing the elasticity of skin as it decomposed in various stages. SH"

Mycroft sighed and turned to face Joanne once more, smiling as she turned.

"Testing such things while there is a pregnant woman present is uncouth. MH"

"So is standing her up on a scheduled date, brother mine. She was not supposed to be here. SH"

Another text rapidly followed as he scowled at the scathing reply.

"Perhaps you should consider the fact that things are rapidly changing and take this into account when handling my doctor. SH"

Jaw tightening, the elder Holmes quickly snapped back a reply.

"I think you should take your own advice. MH"

"Touché. SH"

He rolled his eyes and decided to focus on the sleeping blonde. He watched her for a moment but quickly noticed her beginning to frown and become restless as time wore on. Beads of perspiration started to collect on her brow and whimpers started turning into groans as her breathing sped up.

He'd never witnessed one of her nightmares and reading about something was quite different than seeing it in person. It was unsettling that he could not protect her from her subconscious unlike his brother who had a singular skill at handling situations such as these. The few times they had spent nights together she'd always been calm in his arms and he wondered what horrors played behind her eyelids when she was at rest.

It was when she pulled out her left wrist from under the pillow that his heart sped up in anger and concern. Dark bruises surrounded where her hand joined her arm at the joint. They were finger shaped and well-formed.

Just what had happened? He suspected that the incident that had caused this injury and unsightly bruises must have brought on her nightmare tonight.

Joanne's hands tightened into fists at her side, clutching the blanket so hard that he wondered if the fibers would permanently imbed themselves into her skin.

Removing his blazer, he rolled up his sleeves and loosened his tie. Mycroft moved to kneel instinctively at her side and ran his fingers through her hair in an effort to comfort and wake her.

His eyes drifted to the ring of purple, red, and black and it took more effort than he'd like to admit to keep himself calm and focused on the task at hand. He couldn't help the thought processes and deductions that flew threw his mind.

The bruising was significant, enough to cause a great deal of pain and possibly fracture the fragile bones of her wrist. The individual finger-sized marks were large, suggesting a male and one that was strong enough to make it to where she had been unable to get him to release his hold quick enough to where injury occurred.

He scanned the rest of her to assess her health and was relieved when no further injuries were immediately obvious. Joanne was a fighter, a former soldier, and well trained in self defense so it must have been someone she knew or had met before to be able to have diffused the situation
without further violence. He had not received any notable observations from the security team assigned to her so it had to have happened in the privacy of a patient exam room.

Mycroft grit his teeth, fuming at his lack of control in that regard. He'd made significant progress at minimizing Joanne's involvement in potentially violent patients by limiting her time in a busy A&E. Maybe more drastic measures needed to be put in place to ensure her safety. At least until she was in a less vulnerable position. He hated curbing her freedom and knew that her lifestyle with Sherlock before she'd become pregnant had breathed new life into her after she'd been discharged from the military. Circumstances have changed drastically and certain important factors had to be taken into account. It was temporary he told himself.

Joanne started to writhe and her cries became louder. Mycroft may not be a psychiatrist but, clearly, the assault must have triggered memories of her past, bringing them to the forefront of her mind. There had to be a correlation between the two.

"Joanne?" He tried to gently coax her to wake but, she shook his hand off. Her hands curled into claws and she started to say words but, they were too quiet for him to hear.

Mycroft's thoughts started to assess and bring the pieces of information together and the picture it painted was a disturbing one.

"Joanne." He tried louder and touched her right shoulder, careful to not antagonize her further. Still no response. Her breath turned into static bursts and he could see the rapid shift of her eyes under the lids. Mycroft's lips thinned in worry.

He thought back to the threat at Baker Street. The knife, the ultrasound picture used in the threat, and the location all signified a personal relationship with the doctor. The strength applied to be able to sink the weapon into the wood had been significant and, looking at the injury on the blonde's wrist, the evidence matched up. It was only one mark (thankfully) but, it showed a familiarity. It showed an attempt to make her not leave him or turn away from him but, it also showed that the attack was a limited threat.

How far would this man go?

Joanne started to thrash on the couch and Mycroft started to worry that she'd fall off and injure herself further. He moved to grip both arms and gave her a careful shake. "Joanne! Wake up!" He hated that he was powerless in fixing this. He couldn't stand that it was taking so long to bring her out of reliving the nightmares that plagued her.

Joanne didn't respond, trapped in her own mind. Her hands tightened further only for her to suddenly release her right with a whimper of pain. He imagined he could feel her heart racing as this went on far too long. "Captain Watson, wake up!"

Joanne sat up with a gasp, almost head butting him in the nose. Her blue eyes were wild as they darted around the room searching for threats. He sat back on his heels to give her a minute to wake up properly and was relieved when her breathing started to slow. She brought a shaking hand up to her face to wipe away the cold sweat and hide from Mycroft's knowing eyes.

It hurt to know that she was putting up walls to keep him out. "Are you alright?"

"Yeah. Yes." She slowly drew her hand down and he could see the shame reflected back at him.

"Sorry."

Twisting to sit up properly, she put her feet on the ground. She put her elbows on her knees and her
head hung low as her shoulders slumped. He could hear her controlled breathing. A count of five in. Five out. Five in. Five out.

He knew she needed a minute and went to retrieve a glass of cold water for her. By the time he returned, she'd collected herself and accepted his offering with a weak smile.

"Thank you." After a few swallows, her expression turned dark and embarrassed once more. "I'm sorry."

"Whatever for?" He asked mildly.

She waved her right hand around but, quickly winced at the movement. She noticed his scrutiny and attention on the action. Her jaw firmed and the pregnant blonde looked away in shame. "You know."

"There's nothing to be sorry for, Joanne." He went to her right side and was elated when she allowed him to touch her. The exposed skin on the nape of her neck was damp with sweat left over from the stresses of her nightmare. "I know that I am not the best at understanding emotions and comfort. I may not be the first person you would choose to confide in but, I would like to offer myself. Some would say that I am rather cold but, I think that I can make an exception for you and be willing to learn."

Jo laughed weakly and relaxed under his hand as he gently massaged the muscles at the base of her skull. Leaning down, he picked up and placed the soft throw blanket around her shoulders. The blonde sighed and accepted the blanket. The tension drained from her shoulders so they were no longer the tense T that they had been. Wavy hair fell over her face and hid her from him as she looked down at her feet.

He wanted to see her. He wanted to help. Slowly, as to not startle her, he tucked her hair behind her ear. He never wanted her to feel the need to hide from him.

"This-uh-" Blowing out a frustrated breath, she jerked her head sharply. It was like she was trying to shake off her memories physically. "-it's not really something I like to talk about."

When she turned to face him, he could see the unspoken plea to drop it written on her face. "Thanks anyway."

"Very well but, the offer is still open."

Joanne blinked in surprise but didn't say anything further.

"Tea?" He offered and she shook her head.

"I don't think so. I'm going to have a tough enough time as it is without tea."

Holding up a finger, Mycroft smiled. "I think I might have something."

He led her to the kitchen and encouraged her to take a seat at the table. Pulling out a saucepan, he began to warm her drink, adding cinnamon, nutmeg, and vanilla. His mother used to make it this way when he was a small child and had trouble sleeping. He believed that it might be welcomed by Joanne. He still had some paperwork to finish so he prepared himself a small cup of tea. Once he finished, he brought the drinks to the table and she gratefully accepted the mug with a curious frown. Once it cooled enough, she took a cautious sip and nodded in appreciation.
"It's very good." Blue eyes sparkled in amusement raised her drink in a salute of appreciation. "I'm impressed. I didn't think you Holmes boys could make anything more than tea or toast."

Mycroft chuckled softly. "It's my mother's recipe."

They enjoyed the peaceful quiet. He was always pleasantly surprised by her. As they had gotten to know each other better she had seemed to know when to speak and when to stay quiet. It was a pleasant experience for him. She didn't use unnecessary words to fill the silence.

As they drank, his focus turned to the damage done to her wrist. Even though she was a doctor and likely knew how to care for such an injury, he'd feel more comfortable if someone took a second look. She was holding it stiffly and it was moderately swollen.

He suspected what happened at Baker Street and this latest attack were linked. He was sure of it. She had to know who the person responsible was. Perhaps someone she had served with? It was almost a certainty if the fact that past memories had surfaced to haunt her.

He was very aware that she was a private person and preferred to fight her own battles so he would have to catch her off guard. He waited until Joanne started to slump in her chair.

"What happened today?"

Her eyes that had been starting to close snapped open at his question. "Hm?"

"That." He indicated her injury and she looked down, turning her arm over as if she'd forgotten it had even been there. Lines of discomfort appeared and it increased his want to take her in to have it examined.

"Oh. Nothing."

He put his cup back on the saucer and placed his hands flat on the table. This evasion was dangerous. "It is not 'nothing'. Please do not insult my intelligence."

Her expression became guarded and she was alert, all traces of sleep gone. "I'm not. It was nothing."

Mycroft's frustration began to mount at her refusal to answer. He needed to keep her safe. He...cared too much. "You need to tell me who did this." Reaching out, he was gentle as he touched the bruises. His fingers brushed along her soft skin that was far too warm from inflammation. "I don't want something like this or worse to happen again."

He could tell that it had to be someone from her past but, it would be next to impossible to go through every person she'd encountered during her time she was serving. Even if he was successful in finding records of everyone she'd served with, whoever it might be could possibly not even be listed in her file. There were patients she had treated, enemy soldiers she'd encountered, training camp, commanding officers, and even passing regiments. His first step to get the process of elimination started would be to have the cctv footage in the hospital reviewed and the records of all of her patients looked at to see who she treated during her last shift.

"Mycroft, drop it. It was a patient that got a bit out of hand. It was handled." She said tiredly but, he refused to be dismissed.

"I'll not have you getting hurt, Joanne Watson." He warned. "Please don't fight me on this."

"I'm fine, dammit. I know when something is broken or just a small bruise." Joanne stopped in the middle of stirring her drink and gripped the handle. Her knuckles whitened with how tight she was
holding it and her brow furrowed as her frustration clearly mounted.

"You are far from fine. You have marks on your body put there by someone that is clearly dangerous and a threat." This could be the break they needed to find out who was threatening her. "I need to know who it was and I need to know, now."

As Joanne stood, she faced him down and he knew she wasn't going to give in. "I've put up with this long enough. I have tolerated your interference and overprotective behavior. It's ridiculous, Mycroft. There is nothing going on." Flinging her arms out in emphasis, her face started to redden as her own anger mounted. "It was just a patient and, even though he was a prick and grabbed my arm, he's still entitled to doctor patient confidentiality. He didn't do anything else nor is it even your business anyway."

"It is very much my business." His voice lowered and Mycroft smoothed his features to that of cold anger and disappointment. Joanne's expression of defiance faltered. "This is not something I want to fight about."

Shaking her head, she crossed her arms. "I'm not fighting you on this, Mycroft. I've told you what happened and it's done. Why is this so important? I've had patients like him before and have never had this level of interest by either you or Sherlock."

"If you don't tell me everything that happened and who was the perpetrator of this assault I may have to take more extreme measures to ensure your safety."

He hated to do this but needs must. He couldn't let anything happen to her or their children. Joanne needed to understand just how far he was willing to go to keep her safe, even if it was from herself.

She backed away a step, her face draining of blood and becoming a stark white. "What—what exactly do you mean?"

He picked up his mobile and blue eyes darted from his phone to his face several times before the elder Holmes replied in the same, calm voice. "Perhaps placing you into protective custody to ensure something like this or worse won't happen again."

Joanne reared back as if he'd physically slapped her and blinked rapidly in shock. He saw the minute she made the decision from shock and nervousness to go back to anger in less than fifteen seconds. "Oh, no you bloody well won't!" He didn't answer and Joanne took his silence as an affirmative. Her eyes drifted back to the mobile in his hand they narrowed. "You wouldn't!"

"Don't test me, Joanne Watson. You've been hurt!" His threat wasn't completely empty. He would do it if he needed to but, he needed her to concede and give him the information he needed so the threat could simply be neutralized. Placing her into protective custody would be a last resort but, if needed, he would do it. He lifted his phone and sent a text to Anthea requesting the hospital's cctv recordings and a list of patients she'd seen during her last shift at St. Elizabeth's.

It was when he hit send that she started to raise her voice. It was too reminiscent of a cornered animal snarling to defend itself. "Don't even think about it!" She slashed an arm through the air in front of her and her chest heaved with emotion. "I have tolerated your interference and ridiculous overprotective behavior for long enough. I let my shifts be changed, allowed your people to follow me as protection from imaginary assassins, and I am done. I will not have you going to extremes like that! I will never forgive you. There's no need and you have no right to do so!"

Joanne suddenly paused in her rant and eyed him shrewdly. The way she looked at him was so much like how Sherlock would when trying to figure out a puzzle that it was unnerving. "Unless there is
"Nothing you need concern yourself with in your fragile condition."

"My fragile condition.” She said in a monotone and, for a minute, Mycroft felt unsure of himself. It was a rare thing. “Just tell me! I’m pregnant not fragile, you pompous, arrogant bastard! And I can still take care of myself!"

He immediately recovered and made an effort to bring the conversation back on point. She needed to understand. “You think you’re so strong and invincible but you’re not! You need my help and I need to keep you safe!”

Tilting her head, her hair fell onto her naked shoulders, the necklace he’d given her glinting in the light as a reminder of his determination to keep her safe. The image she portrayed in her pajamas, feet bare, her rounded belly with the skin partially exposed in front of her, and her injury obvious even in the low light, she did look so fragile. Her eyes spoke a different story. Normally, they were a beautiful, calm, blue that reminded him of a spring day. Right now as they were focused on him, they were the icy color of tempered steel as she glared. "Right, then. Is that how you see me? As a weak woman who needs the protection of a man and is unable to care for herself?"

He would not be cowed. "I need to keep you safe!"

"No, you don’t get to decide what to do with me as if I’m your property and you can do as you wish with me! I’m done, Mycroft. I won’t keep these children from their father or family but, I won’t have you treating me this way. You cannot think to exert control over every situation and if you also do it to the twins then you will lose them as surely as you'll lose me. I'm telling you it was nothing more than an unruly patient and it was handled. I will not have you lock me away as if I'm some sort of princess of old in an ivory tower that you let out when you choose because of your stubborn male pride. I'm not some helpless, ignorant, halfwit that walks around with her eyes shut and bumps into walls."

Mycroft was speechless at her rant and she continued, her words as cutting as a Holmes'. "Should I run to you every time I get a cut or bruise like a child? My knight in shining Armani." She said mocking him and he found his voice when he was able to speak during a break in her speech.

"You're mine to care for; now and forever."

"Oh, so now I'm your property?"

The conversation was rapidly spiraling out of control. He pinched the bridge of his nose. Even fights with Sherlock didn't come to this level of disagreement over something that was common sense. "That's not it at all."

"Then what is it because, you've been doing a stellar job explaining your reasoning behind this extreme. It's not ok." Joanne was stiff with tension and looked ready to either fight or flee.

He needed to correct her wrong assumptions. He wasn't doing this because he thought she was weak. He wasn't doing this for her to think of him as her 'hero'. He was doing it because he couldn't bear to think of a life without her or their children in it. "It’s because I love you! Ok?" He shouted back.

Joanne reared back, shocked. Then an a frightening calm took over as if she seemed to believe she understood everything. Her eyes shuttered like a portcullis falling, hiding her emotions and cutting him off from her. “You don’t get to say that. You don’t get to lie about emotions and love to
manipulate me like that. You won't even move to the next step in a relationship. You constantly pull away from me. Remember what you said before? You've said it to me once. Love? Sentiment? It's a chemical defect found on the losing side. I was an idiot to ever believe that there could be something more between us. Goodbye, Mycroft."

She started to leave and he took a hold of her arm, forgetting in the heat of the moment that it was her hurt one. Joanne hissed in pain. "Let go."

He shifted his hold higher up but, he couldn't let her leave. Not like this! "I can't."

"Let go before I break your arm. I will not be manhandled and pawed at twice in one day."

He dropped her wrist as if he'd been burned, cursing his stupidity and allowing his emotions to get the better of him. "You won't tell me who did this so I need you to be placed somewhere safe until this passes. I would rather have you be in a safe house hating me than out in danger. I will not allow it!" He pleaded with her.

"Oh, because the great Mycroft Holmes has given a Royal decree then it must be done. Mister British Government." She laughed without humor.

"Joanne, don't be so juvenile. You have more than yourself to think about." He reminded her. It was frustrating that she just didn't get it.

"Is that it? It's not me. It's the babies isn't it? I'm just an incubator for the Holmes progeny." She snarled.

"It's not like that! You're hurt!" He said weakly. "I...I-

He tried to reach out to bring her back to him. He wanted to hold her close. Had it only been an hour ago that things had been so calm and peaceful?

She backed away from the offending appendage. "No. Just. No."

As she turned her back and stormed away, he worried that he had lost her. How had this happened? The sound of her putting on her coat and shoes drifted down the hall. As the door slammed, he wondered if she was slamming the door metaphorically on them both. She'd left in such a rush to get away from him that she hadn't even changed from the flimsy pajamas.

He sat slowly at the table and lowered his head in defeat, the very image of a broken man. How could he have messed things up so badly? He'd ruined it all! Damn Joanne for her stubbornness and damn himself for letting this happen.
Chapter 20

Chapter Notes

Well, finally another chapter added. Sorry it took me so long and thank you to everyone patient enough to stick with the story! Jo finally gets some sense knocked into her and Sherlock isn't happy at her answers. Hopefully, he's not considered too OOC. I'm kind of going off how he reacted when it was revealed the kind of person Mary was as to how he talks to Jo.

Let me know what you think and, as always, I love hearing from everyone!

DarkWaters

Chapter Twenty

"Damn it all to hell!"

The moment she stepped outside into the cold night her anger drained away and a cold, deep disappointment settled inside. How could she have been so stupid to have thought there would have ever been more between them? He'd used her emotions and feelings against her by claiming he loved her. Was it even true or a means to an end to ensure her compliance during her pregnancy?

Thinking back to everything, in particular his refusal for any form of intimacy, showed he must not have thought of her that way. Had he just been humoring her? She knew damn well she was out of his league both in social standing and intelligence but, she'd been naive enough to think he wanted more. He'd manipulated her to get what he had wanted just like he did in his work and she'd fallen for it hook line and sinker.

Shivering in the night air, she regretted leaving in little more than the thin fabric of her pajamas that didn't keep her warm. She was also embarrassed that she'd reacted so harshly but, she had to set limits.

"I'm such a bloody idiot!"

She felt so stupid. She should have known better. After all, how could a man like Mycroft Holmes fall for her? She knew Sherlock was a gifted actor so it fell to reason that his older brother would be also.

A tendril of doubt crept in as she waited for a taxi to take her back to Baker Street. What if she had been wrong the entire time she'd believed he cared for her? Mycroft’s declaration of love was entirely unexpected and definitely not the way she'd wanted to hear it. Did he truly mean it or was he just trying to get her to comply because he knows how much stock she put in emotion. They’d played on it before. Many times. A Holmes was usually a consummate actor.

Her shivering started to cause her shoulder to ache and she was grateful when a cab finally picked her up and dropped her off at home. She needed time to think and calm down and that meant getting away for a bit. She also wanted to be in a place that wasn't the easiest for Mycroft to visit and catch her off guard.

Despite the welcome warmth of the cab she shivered for quite another reason. Mycroft had
threatened her and that scared her in a way she hadn't thought possible. It leant credence to the fact that he expected her to roll over and accept whatever he deemed necessary. He clearly didn't respect her and think of her as an equal and it showed with him wanting to lock her away. The minute she stopped complying with his orders he tried to take away her independence and freedom as if to lock her away in a cage. It only served to build up her mental case against him that maybe she'd been so very wrong in believing that he could love her. Had he only shown interest to get her to comply? When she'd stopped abiding by his rules, he'd resorted to force to get what he wanted. Was this why Sherlock and he had had such a tumultuous relationship for so long?

Jo clenched and released her right hand into a fist repeatedly, taking deep, calming breaths and was glad to get home so she could cool off in private. Slowly walking up the seventeen steps, her mind was still in a fog as she unlocked the door.

"Pen!"

Joanne rolled her eyes. It was 3am and Sherlock was still awake. Why had she even been expecting him to sleep? Glancing over at the consulting detective, she could see the tip of a pen in his dressing gown pocket.

"In your pocket and, no, I'm not handing it to you."

He didn't even look her way. Normally, he didn't notice her entrances and exits so it was amusing to see when he did. She hung up her coat and slipped off her shoes.

"So, are you and my rotund sibling boyfriend and girlfriend?"

Jo froze mid-step. The question surprised her and she had to think a minute. Were they? They hadn't exactly bothered to define what they were but that seemed to be a close approximation. The fight they'd had put everything into doubt and she wasn't so sure anymore. "I guess you could say that." She said slowly.

Sherlock turned to face her and she could see he was genuinely curious. "Perhaps. I'm not well versed in these things." Pausing a minute, the curly-haired detective looked back up. "Considering his advanced age, the term 'man-friend' would be more appropriate."

Joanne snorted and started to make her way across the room to go upstairs. "That sounds more like what you would call a dog." She replied.

Sherlock hummed in response and shrugged in feigned disinterest. "As the old adage goes, if the shoe fits."

"You might be right in this case" She murmured and took one step on the stairs to head up to her room when she felt a shift in the air behind her.

"Why are you back at 3am and in your pajamas?"

She turned around, surprised that he even realized what time it was let alone her appearance. It felt like he was x-raying her with those intelligent gray eyes as he looked her over. His focus darted to her face, flushed from the cold outside, and then zeroed in on the bruises on her sore wrist. Moran had done a number on it and she'd considered wrapping it for support.

His hands darted out before she could back away and took her arm and hand in a gentle but firm hold, turning it this way and that. "What happened?"

"Mycroft didn't do this." She protested and Sherlock rolled his eyes at her answer.
"Obviously. He's not strong enough to cause this. His grip is only strong enough to grab the last slice of chocolate gateau."

He still held her and Jo's lips thinned. She wasn't in the mood to be pawed again for the third time in twenty-four hours.

"This happened earlier. The timing of the developing bruising and swelling is inconsistent for when he arrived home. Possibly a fracture, but it's more likely to be a sprain with deep bruising. Your attacker deliberately held tight in an effort to cause pain in an attempt to assert dominance. You left Mycroft's in a hurry, fast enough that you didn't even change into proper clothing. Your body language is defensive. An argument?"

Sometimes, she hated it when he figured out everything. "I'm not in the mood, tonight, Sherlock. Leave off." Jo sighed.

Grey eyes pierced her and she didn't like it. Joanne jerked out of his hold and she could see she'd hurt him by her reaction.

He stepped closer slowly, as if she was some startled, small, hurt thing that would run at the slightest hint of movement. "Joanne, I cannot 'Leave off'. You know this."

Jo's jaw firmed and she nodded. "I know. I'll talk but, not right now. Later."

She turned to go up to her room, but found her way quickly blocked by a lanky body. Pinching the bridge of her nose, Joanne suddenly felt very tired. If it wasn't one Holmes then it was another. "Sherlock, I'm tired and I really just want to go to bed."

The babies squirmed and kicked inside as if in agreement and she rested her tender wrist atop her belly. When she opened her eyes, she had to fight the urge to jump back. Sherlock was crouched down, his face a scant inch from her own. It was a stark reminder of just how tall he was compared to her.

"At least let me help with wrapping your injury. We both know you can't do it properly with one hand even if it is your dominant hand."

She smiled wryly. "And we both know you can't wrap a sprain with both hands and a first aid manual in front of you."

"Well, I don't have a first aid manual so I guess I'll have to settle for my doctor." He sniffed, offended.

She wasn't able to stop the fond eye roll and slowly made her way over to the settee while Sherlock went to the bathroom to collect the well-stocked kit.

She must have dozed off and startled awake at the feeling of cold. Sherlock was frowning as he turned his head this way and that to look at her injury. "It's fine." She murmured, voice rough from sleep and he pursed his lips as if to argue, but thought better of it.

"I know you had a fight with my brother and I can only deduce that it had something to do with this." The corners of his lips turned down on the last word and Jo nodded.

"You're not wrong, but not entirely right. This played a large part, but it was his response to it that caused the fight. I don't do well with ultimatums."

Sherlock arched a brow in a silent request for her to elaborate and the blonde sighed.
"He said he was going to place me in protective custody and it-" She clenched a jaw, trying to find the right words, but failing. "-it scares me that he could, and possibly would, simply strip away my freedom and independence with little more than a thought because I simply won't bow down."

Sherlock's lips thinned and there was something more to it suggesting this same threat had been either used on him or he'd been threatened by it. "While we both know Mycroft has a flair for the dramatic-"

"Pot, kettle."

"-we also both know he wouldn't suggest something so drastic without a good reason." He continued as if she hadn't spoken. Sherlock leaned back on his heels and tilted his head up to face her. "You remember my warning months ago when I told you he was the most dangerous man you will ever meet?"

She nodded slowly.

"And I told you to imagine his enemies?"

Joanne deflated like a balloon that had been popped by his words. He pulled her wrist towards him and set to the task of drying it and deftly wrapping it. He seemed completely focused on the task, but she knew he was far from done. "He cares for you far more than you realize and knows you are in a dangerous position. You were before when you were just his...friend...but now that you carry his children and are in a relationship with him, he is scared. You are vulnerable in a way you never have been before as much as you don't want to admit it, but it is true."

"This wasn't because of him, though. It was because of me."

Sherlock's chest rose and fell in a deep sigh. "Does it really matter?"

"No. I suppose it doesn't, but it doesn't change the fact that his response was not ok. That amount of power over somebody else's life is frightening to me as much as I hate to admit it."

"Are you truly so surprised? You chose him. You know only a small amount of what he does and you have seen that it is just as dangerous as he is."

"He wasn't supposed to be like that!" She growled and both of Sherlock's eyebrows went up in something close to resembling pity at her ignorance.

"You have seen how far I would go to protect those that threaten my family and all that I would do even to protect them from themselves. I have even done the same with you and Mrs. Hudson. My brother is no different. While my efforts are more subtle, his are just as effective." He explained and Jo's eyes drifted away. Sherlock's words hit a little too close to home and she hated it when he was right and she was wrong.

There was still a small amount of fear and doubt that refused to be banished and it crept around all of her defenses no matter how hard she tried to banish it. "Would he ever turn that dangerous side on me?" She faced him head-on, nausea threatening to overwhelm her. "Would he ever hurt me if I went against him?" Sherlock paused and cocked his head to the side, clearly not understanding the question. "I don't mean physically. I know he'd never do that, but what I do mean is would he say that he loves me just to hurt me or manipulate me?" She asked in a small voice.

Sherlock smiled and his eyes softened. "You've met my idiot of a brother." Jo snorted. "Well, it's true. Everyone is an idiot, but some more than others and Mycroft is a prime example of idiocy. He is careful with his words and may omit and twist things to get what he wants-sometimes with strings
attached for the end result to be in his favor, but I doubt he would do something as low as that. No-
correction. He would never do something as low as that especially to you. He's an idiot not stupid as
much as it pains me to say that. He would never do something so foolish to you, especially, in the
middle of a lover's spat."

Warmth bloomed at Sherlock's explanation. Fucking Holmes brothers. "Maybe you're right."

"I'm always right. You should know this by now unless your intellect has finally sunk below that of
fatcroft's which I had never considered possible before." He sniffed, offended, but there was no heat
in it and Jo relaxed despite the earlier tension that had been in the room moments before.

"How did you get so wise?"

"Must have learned it from a certain blonde army Doctor."

Jo chuckled and cuffed him around the head. "Must have been a bad influence."

"Obviously."

He rubbed his head in a mockery of pain and his messy curls became more disorganized.

"Anyone I know?" She joked and Sherlock's white teeth showed through a wide smile. "Definitely."

She sobered and gripped his hand with her good one. "Thanks, mate. For both the help with fixing
my hand and the advice. Normally, our positions are reversed."

"Well, we both know that my intellect far outstrips your own. I just choose to not show it."

"Oi!"

She went to shove him playfully but he quickly caught her arm and his fingers skirted over the tan
bandages stabilizing the joint. "Now, are you going to tell me who hurt you and what happened to
set off my brother's annoying concern?"

Joanne pulled her limb away and he moved from his position on the floor to sit next to her. "I had a
patient today. He was someone I knew from back in my days in the RAMC."

Sherlock waited patiently and she knew just how hard that it was for him to wait so she continued.
"He was a patient back then as well and he'd been slightly obsessed with me because he'd thought
that I cared for him more than what a doctor would a patient. I guess he still believed it to be true."

Eyebrows drew down and those gray eyes turned thoughtful. "And the name of this person?"

"You're like a dog with a bone. I'm considering thwacking you on your nose with a rolled up
newspaper."

"Joanne-" He warned.

"Fine. The pair of you will never leave me alone if I don't tell you, will you? Despite that divulging
the name of a patient under my care breaks about twenty codes of medical ethics!" Joanne
complained.

"You're learning."

"Sebastian Moran."
The brunette's head snapped up so fast that she had to back away to prevent him from head butting her. "What?"

Suspicion made the hairs on the back of her neck raise and her skin felt like ants were crawling on it. "Ye-es? Is it important."

He didn't deign to answer. She didn't even get a chance to ask him again before the door slammed behind him, his coat almost getting caught between the door and the frame. "What the bloody hell was that about?"

The empty room didn't answer her any more than her best friend had and she flopped back on the couch in a graceless sprawl. She'd get answers if she had to tie those two down to do it and she would. Her time with Sherlock had made her an expert in tying knots using multiple different types of rope.
Chapter Twenty-One

The ride to Mycroft's house took far too long for Sherlock's taste. It left him with too much time to think! His mind went over every piece of evidence, going as far back as when he had been on hiatus and even before that. He had been so sure that he had taken out Moran. The bastard should be rotting in the ground not threatening his best friend and a risk to her life and safety. Not only hers but the lives of his nieces or nephews.

He hadn't been joking when he'd told Joanne that he'd be lost without his blogger. He would be more than lost just as much as his brother would be. They'd be destroyed. She'd somehow worked her way into their hearts and they would never be the same again.

How had he missed it? How had he missed Moran surviving? He'd destroyed Moriarty's web and had ensured the other two snipers threatening Mrs. Hudson and Lestrade had been taken out, but he'd somehow messed this up. Not only had he messed it up; so had Mycroft and he wasn't sure that they'd ever be able to forgive themselves if their mistake cost Jo her life or the lives of her unborn children.

Sherlock had seen the handiwork of Moriarty's right-hand man close up and personal. It wasn't pretty. It was savage and disturbing. One of the man's unfortunate victims had only been able to be identified by DNA records taken from family members. He usually killed from a distance, a classic behavioral trait of a sniper, but there had been few exceptions. They'd clearly been personal and that was what frightened the consulting detective the most. This...obsession with Joanne was most definitely personal.

How had he missed it?

Sherlock's gray eyes drifted out of the cab window looking at the late-night streets of London, but not taking anything in. With Joanne pulling away from Mycroft it left her extremely vulnerable. Sherlock was usually adept at protecting her just as well as she did him, but this madman was on the same level of ingenuity and evil as Moriarty if his ability to fool both Holmes brother was anything to go by.

He'd been telling Joanne the truth when he'd told her that his brother was an idiot. A well-meaning one, but still an idiot. He should know better. He was adept at reading people, but when sentiment
got in the way, he tended to let his heart overrule his head and mess things up spectacularly. It was not usually a problem since there were so few people he truly cared for, but Joanne was one and he needed to use both assets.

Sherlock knew that Mycroft loved Jo more than she could ever imagine. She'd always had trust issues mixed with pride and Mycroft's protective efforts, no matter that they were well-intentioned, would only get her back up. It was the same with affection. She'd always been an all or nothing person, preferring to have partners be upfront and direct. Half gestures never had sat well with her. It was why they'd always got on well. He didn't hold back.

The cab pulled up in front of Mycroft's door and he threw the money at the driver, his focus on getting inside and talking to the redhead. Time was of the essence.

He didn't bother to announce himself as he entered the house. Sometimes he preferred to not do so just to irritate Mycroft, but tonight was different. It was that he was scared and angry.

Mycroft was in his study, a glass of brandy in one hand and staring sightlessly at a photograph. He was the very picture of a defeated man and he felt a moment of guilt at what he had to do. His shirtsleeves were rolled up his forearms, braces hanging limply from his trousers, and he looked devastated.

"Joanne came home early. I do like to have her back at home, but would like some advanced warning to ensure I am not otherwise occupied with an experiment that her presence could disrupt."

Mycroft jumped at the interruption and it showed the younger brother that Mycroft was more affected than he'd suspected if he'd missed Sherlock's entry into his personal study. A muscle ticked in his jaw at the nonchalance Sherlock was exhibiting. "It's private and not your business."

"It is when I am stuck in the thick of it because it is my brother and best friend."

"Fine." He snapped. "She decided to not adhere to my requests for information regarding recent activities done against her person."

Older and far more tired eyes drifted away from him and Sherlock tilted his head at the unusual behavior. "I believe it is more complicated than that."

"It is." He admitted.

Glaring, Sherlock took a seat on one of the overstuffed, pompous chairs his brother favored. "And so you threatened her with forced imprisonment 'for her safety' when I specifically warned you against doing such a thing."

Standing rapidly, he slammed his hands in the desk for effect which caused the tumbler to rattle dangerously. "Dammit, Sherlock! It's not that I wanted to. It's that I had to to be able to get vital information which she wasn't giving me. She's like you in more ways then one and I need to keep her safe even if it from her own stubborn and childish belief that she can take care of something of this nature by herself."

"While I agree, dear brother, you need to remember that you chose her. Her independence, as foolish as it is at some moments, is why you did. You would never have accepted a weak, sniveling, boring woman. You knew this going in and I suspect that it would have happened whether or not she had become with child; more specifically your children."

"As much as I am loathe to admit, you may be correct." He admitted.
"Did you mean it?"

Mycroft gave him a sharp look. "Yes, I would have placed her in protective custody at some point if
the threat against her became more severe, but not quite yet,"

He rolled his eyes. "Your idiocy is unbecoming. I am speaking of your untimely declaration of love."

"Yes." He whispered.

Mycroft, much like his best friend, deflated and sank into his chair, placing his head in his hands.

"She doesn't believe you."

"I know. I figured that much out myself."

"Well, it seems you will have to disabuse her of her erroneous belief."

A puzzled frown marred his face and he ran a hand through his hair causing it to stand on end. "I
am unsure how."

Did he have to do everything? When he had given their relationship his reluctant approval he had not
thought he'd be forced to do something as inane as playing Cupid. "Figure it out. You are supposed
to be the smart one in this family." He shot him a look of contempt. "Or so you claim to be."

He grew serious. More urgent matters than his brother's love life demanded their focus. "I saw the
same unsettling evidence of injury you did on Joanne when she arrived back at Baker Street."

The older Holmes nodded slowly.

"I have a name."

Mycroft's head jerked up sharply and Sherlock's lips turned down in distaste. He knew this news
would not be received well, but it was important. "Sebastian Moran."

The redhead paled just as he knew he would. "What? How is that even possible?"

"We failed and so did your inept people." He growled. "He was a patient of hers when she served in
Afghanistan so the link was missed." An expression of disgust and anger caused him to appear
almost feral. "It's likely because she wasn't the leading surgeon on the case and so her name didn't
appear on his chart."

His eyebrows drew down in confusion. "Why would he be obsessed with Joanne?"

The younger Holmes shrugged. "I would say it's because he holds some sort of twisted belief that I
should have died as the agreement had been laid out and a grudge for his master's death, but that
doesn't fit with the pattern of behavior."

"It's likely personal."

A slight nod. "Joanne confirmed as such when she told me about his unhealthy belief that she loved
him during their short time together when he was her patient and the their most recent conversation
plus, the message he sent when he left those items in our flat would indicate a more sinister a more
twisted agenda."

"Sherlock, How did you find out this information?"
"I asked her." He told him simply.

"I asked her, too." Mycroft protested.

He glared at his brother. "I am giving up trade secrets, but I asked her nicely not demand the information from her as if she was one of your lackeys. I am telling you that she isn't like us and appreciates such mundane things as the societal niceties employed by others." Sighing at his silence, Sherlock attempted to give him more advice. "You should tell her you're sorry. Jo does tend to go for that sort of thing."

Mycroft returned the glare, but he refused to be intimidated by it. "I will not apologize for trying to keep her safe. I will, however, explain my reasoning behind saying what I did."

Sherlock shot him a baleful glance. "Don't say I didn't try to help you. It's your funeral. Don't take the risk of losing one of the most important things in your life."

With those parting words of advice, he turned, leaving the government official to do what was needed and necessary on both fronts. They would not fail again in destroying the last link to Moriarty.

xXx

Morning came and, along with it, so did the return of Jo's questions about just what was going on. She wasn't stupid. She knew that there was a threat against her life and with the way that Sherlock had reacted last night when she'd mentioned Moran's name that had let her know that it was him that they were concerned about.

The who was answered, but the why hadn't been. Sure, he'd been a creepy bastard when they'd crossed paths those many years ago and he had been hostile yesterday, but it hadn't been anything she hadn't been able to handle. It was now obvious that Mycroft was just as worried.

The fact that they had not been aware of the name proved that while they had been aware of some sort of threat, but they hadn't known just who it had been. What had they seen and just how much had they been keeping from her? If there was a valid threat against her and her unborn children, how much would they continue to keep from her?

She needed to know this and had needed to know it. She was literally blind and clearly had been ignorant to the danger for who knows how long. In her mind, that was far more detrimental to her safety than anything. Jo should have been told to be able to be on guard and made aware.

The pregnant blonde rolled over, the babies kicking in protest at her change of position. The feel of those tiny lives literally depending on her also had the side effect of remembering how damn vulnerable she was. She loved them; God, she loved them so much it hurt, but that was one of the many reasons she had never wanted children. It made her physically incapable of so many things, self-defense only one and later even tying her brogues was hoping to be near impossible with her swelling belly getting in the way. It'd only get bigger as time wore on and make her clumsier. Another reason? Well, it was obvious. She'd need to depend on another person, not just during the pregnancy, but after as well for the rest of her (and their) live(s).

And the big one, another life-no-two other lives that were helpless would be dependent on her forever. She'd never had that before. Joanne had had literally held her patients' lives in her hands, but that was different. She'd had the men and women she'd served with during her time in the military and, sure, she'd had Sherlock be dependent on her, and now Mycroft sometimes, but if she was to suddenly be gone they would survive. They had before she'd come into the picture and they were
Staring at her bedroom ceiling, she wanted to scream at the injustice of it. This wasn't how it was supposed to be. She was supposed to be able to handle everything on her own. How was she supposed to do this?

"Whoo hoo? Joanne?"

Mrs. Hudson's voice drifted up the stairs to her bedroom and she couldn't stop the fond smile at hearing the kind woman. She may call herself their landlady, but she was far more than that to both Sherlock and her.

She pulled herself to a sitting position with a small amount of difficulty and had a moment's thought at how long that was going to be possible as time went on and her body became more cumbersome and slow. As it was, her lower back was starting to hurt with the change in her posture to accommodate the growing children she carried and she was starting to waddle slightly. Thankfully, her roommate and the father of their children had been wise enough to not comment on it knowing it'd be met with a glare that had reduced more than a few of the men she'd worked with in the past to tears.

"Fuck."

"Now that's not very lady-like language!"

Jo rolled her eyes fondly. Clearly she'd been heard despite the distance and she reluctantly pulled on her dressing gown, ready to try and greet the older woman with as much dignity as was possible in her barely conscious and unprepared state.

The smell of a full English greeted her and she felt gratitude for the thoughtful gesture. When her stomach decided to growl in appreciation, it caused Mrs. Hudson to laugh in a high-pitched giggle that was reminiscent of that of a much younger woman.

She was gently steered to the small table in the kitchen and watched over line an hawk as she tucked in with a thank you muffled by a mouth full of food under an approving expression from her "landlady" and soon to be self-appointed grandmother to Mycroft's and her children.

A metal box and a small package wrapped in fabric was placed in front of her and Jo swallowed with difficulty.

"This one-" She indicated the box. "-was delivered by the rather insistent gentleman hanging about right outside the door to the flat. I made sure he was one of those men hired by that brother of Sherlock's."

She'd made her opinion of Mycroft pretty clear over the years. She wasn't a fan, but had grudgingly accepted him because of the fact that he cared for her loved surrogate son. She slowly opened the metal container and smiled at the sight of her gun carefully tucked away in the foam with her clip and a spare encased inside. A peace offering perhaps? She'd been so stupid forgetting it in her eagerness to leave her boyfriend's-significant other's-father of her children's- whatever he was to her's home.

The second package, carefully wrapped, made her frown in confusion and curiosity and she pushed away her mostly eaten plate. Martha Hudson almost looked nervous as she slowly untied the bow atop the gift. She wasn't really used to receiving gifts and had always treated the moments before the big reveal with just as much care and happiness as the actual reveal of what it was.

"Now, it's not much-"
She looked anxious as Jo started to open it, her hands wringing and her entire focus on the act of her opening whatever was inside. When she finally pulled away the fabric her breath caught. "Two small blankets, one yellow and one a pale snowy white were inside, clearly home made and knit with love in every stitch caused her breath to catch. It must have taken hours to make these. Jo's eyes found hers and she had to try her best to force back her tears. Bloody pregnancy hormones. "They're beautiful." Jo swallowed around a lump caught in her throat. "I love them."

The answering smile showed it was the right answer. "Well, if you'd tell me just what you were having then I would have been able to make sure I got the colors right."

"They're perfect as they are." Jo stood and pulled her into a hug, her rounded belly pressing against the older woman's and Mrs. Hudson hugged back so tight that she wondered if she was going to ever let go. "Thank you." She told her and they pulled away, but she still didn't let go and held onto the younger woman's shoulders. A small, knowing smile graced her lips as she fixed Jo with a look that was determined to make her understand and break through her stubbornness.

"You are going to be a fantastic mum. I can see that."

Hot tears slid down her cheeks, causing Jo to, once again curse her hormones and she pulled a handkerchief out of the sleeve of her purple paisley dress to press it into her hands. "Now, enough of that. Why don't you have a seat while I fix you a cuppa and get these dishes washed and put away."

She nodded and moved to her customary seat in the sitting room.

"Now, just this once, dear. I'm your landlady, not your housekeeper."

The familiar reminder made her laugh as she clutched the handmade blankets in her hands. She lay the soft wool across her distended stomach and looked forward to the moment she'd be able to wrap her children in them, at peace for the first time this morning.
Chapter 22

Chapter Notes

I know I’m awful at updating this story! Sorry for the delay and I hope this chapter makes up for it. We’ve got the big apology from the fallout of Jo and Mycroft’s big fight.

Chapter Twenty-Two

After carefully packing away the blankets lovingly made by Mrs. Hudson, Joanne bundled up to brave the cold January weather. The coat from Mycroft was a secure weight along with the handy holster for her gun helped her to feel a small sense of security. With Sherlock’s reaction to her answer of just who had been her patient it had put a small amount of worry in her mind that just couldn’t be dismissed away.

While she almost wanted to hide away based on both Holmes' behaviors, she needed to get out. Both her shifts at the clinic as well as at St. Elizabeth's had been cancelled indefinitely without reason, but she knew who had ‘arranged’ her leave. Her calls to both Sherlock and Mycroft had gone unanswered as well. For about five minutes she had considered storming down there to demand answers, but she knew that it'd be unlikely she'd get any. At least not right away. Sadly, she was used to being ignored when they were hyper focused on something or another and it'd be like screaming at a brick wall for her troubles.

Then there was the fact that, despite Mycroft and her being in a relationship (maybe?), he still had a job to do and she couldn't just barge in and interrupt him from his duties. It would be just as bad as if he did the same to her while she was working.

The flat just seemed so stifling and Mycroft's 'threat' of placing her into protective custody still swam around in her mind like a shark; harmless until triggered when it saw a weakness. She needed to go somewhere that wasn't related to Sherlock or Mycroft at the minute and her options were painfully limited.

She'd just checked the clip of her browning to holster it in her coat when she heard a muffled thump outside the flat door. She stopped everything and her senses heightened to where everything was in a razor sharp focus. Jo carefully secured the coat tighter around herself, thankful for the paranoid foresight of Mycroft stitching lightweight Kevlar into it and flicked the safety of her weapon.

The blonde's eyes drifted to her mobile lying too far away to get at in a reasonable amount of time. Even if she could, how long would it take for someone to get to her? Probably too long especially if someone was literally feet away from her.

She made her way on light feet to the door, psyching herself up and shoving away any anxiety she was feeling at the thought of someone dangerous on the other side. Her heart may be beating out of her chest, but her grip on her gun was steady and sure.

There was silence on the other side and she cursed her nerves and both Holmeses for instilling this fear in her. No proper warnings had been given and not nearly enough information had been shared so she had no clue what to expect in regards to their safety.
Giving herself a silent countdown, her hand tightened on the doorknob and she steeled herself for whatever danger awaited her on the other side. She couldn't see any shadows moving under the gap of the door so she had no clue what to expect other than the fact that there was definitely someone there. Her instincts screamed at her danger danger danger.

Her right wrist screamed in protest and the simple act of being tense at holding the knob and Jo grit her teeth in an effort to ignore it. One problem at a time, Watson.

Flinging the door open, Jo used it to shield herself and spun around, weapon pointing at...agent Riley. The muzzle was barely a foot away to, the shocked agent's face who immediately flung his hands up in surrender.

Jo immediately pulled her weapon back, clicking on the safety. "-the hell, Riley! I could have bloody killed you!"

The sudden shock quickly wore off, leaving her shaky with a mix of unspent adrenaline and relief that there wasn't someone with hostile intentions behind her door.

The poor agent was still looking at her with a mix of fear and nervousness as she made her weapon safe and put it down on the side table. She didn't fail to notice his eyes drifting back and forth between her and her gun.

"Ma'am, I'm sorry. I didn't mean to startle you."

The young agent's mocha skin was still pale with shock at having had a weapon pointed in his face with no warning, especially from the person he was assigned to as her protection detail.

"What were you doing right outside my door like some sort of stalker?"

Riley straightened into a parade rest stance. "Ma'am, I was ordered to maintain a closer proximity to ensure your safety. I was also attempting to give you some privacy while still doing my duty."

"Really? Right outside the door? A bit much, don't you think?" She should have anticipated something like this, but it was still a surprise. She cursed herself for her naïveté. "Were you told why?"

Riley's eyes darted away from her in avoidance and Jo wanted to strangle him. "I'm not at liberty to discuss it as of yet, ma'am."

Sighing, she picked back up her gun and slid it into her hidden holster. "Well, I'm heading out."

The young man shifted his stance and opened his mouth to protest, but with the glare she gave him he gave a sharp nod in acknowledgement.

xXx

It was still morning by the time the car Mycroft provided pulled up to Greg's house. Since it was, technically, his day off, Jo was hoping to visit her friend. She missed him and it had been far too long since she'd seen him outside of the few cases she was allowed on.

Jo was just reaching for the door handle when she caught sight of a pink robe exiting the DI's house. Her natural curiosity caused her to freeze and the unknown woman was facing away from her and bending down to pick up the milk on the step. Straight brown hair cascaded down past her shoulders and when she stood, Jo saw Greg stepping out.
The brunette turned and Greg leaned down to press a gentle kiss to her and the familiar profile of the unknown woman’s face caused Jo’s mouth to drop open in shock. Molly Hooper was stood on her tiptoes and returning the chaste kiss. When the DI leaned back there was a small smile on his face and Jo couldn’t stop her own smile.

How long had that been going on? How had she even missed it? She’d been so self-involved, she hadn’t even known. Shaking her head, she tapped on the dividing glass and signaled to the driver to head to Mycroft’s. That moment between Greg and Molly? It was private.

Besides, she had other things to deal with.

By the time the car had pulled up to Mycroft’s home, Jo was wringing her hands. She wasn’t terribly sure about how to deal with him and she felt a bit ashamed at her reaction. If she’d have been in his position with Sherlock or Mycroft in danger would she have done the same? Probably. It didn’t make it an easier pill to swallow, but it was a bitter fact.

She hated having to be dependent and needing someone else.

The pregnant blonde made her way into the house and she honestly shouldn’t have been surprised to find it empty. Her mug from last night was still on the table and the chair in the same position from when she’d pushed away from the table during their fight.

It was a stark reminder and, the fact that it hadn’t been cleared away, showed just how upset the older Holmes had been. He hadn’t even put anything in the sink.

She was making her way to the sitting room when the sound of the front door opening caught her attention and Jo knew exactly who it was simply by the tread of the shoes on the hardwood floors.

When he came into view, Jo’s heart broke at how exhausted Mycroft looked. The dark circles under his eyes were vivid against the paleness of his face. His light blue tie was loose and his shirt was wrinkled, a tea stain on the lower right hand side. Mycroft’s auburn hair seemed ruffled like he’d run his hands through it repeatedly. As he removed his shoes and shucked off his coat, his movements were slow and tired like an old man’s.

She’d never seen him like this. Ill? Yes. Frustrated? Angry? Yes. This was altogether something different. He was clearly so off that he hadn’t even noticed her presence which only served to show just how much all of this was affecting him.

She stepped forward hesitantly. “Mycroft?”

When he lifted his head, gray eyes widened and there was an expression of such hope and sorrow mixed in that everything she had wanted to say died in her throat. She simply raised her arms and Mycroft willingly came to her, wrapping his own around her. His muscles were so tense that it made her own hurt in sympathy.

Jo tilted her face up and pressed her lips to his, a silent apology and Mycroft surged forward. His mouth opened and hers followed suit to allow him entry.

Large hands frantically roamed over her body almost as if he didn’t trust that she was actually there.

When she was able to pull her mouth away from him, she didn’t leave. Her forehead pressed against his as they panted and breathed the same air. His eyes were wild and so many emotions swirled within their depths that she wanted-no-needed to help calm the storm within him.

He opened his mouth to say something and Jo placed a finger over his lips to stop him. “Later. We’ll talk about this later.”
He nodded jerkily and his hands spasmed on her hips. He was showing what he fully felt for her and it gave her the chance to do the same.

“Come on, Mycroft. Follow me.” She urged and pulled him along to follow her upstairs and to his bedroom.

Once they crossed the threshold, he kissed her again. It wasn’t sweet. It wasn’t gentle. It was frantic and Jo let him. Her fingers fumbled on his shirt buttons while his hands went under her jumper, his own fingers splaying on her swollen belly and sliding up to lift the fabric and she raised her arms to let him.

Warm skin was finally revealed to her and she pulled the shirt off off him. Her own quickly followed and Mycroft kissed her neck in frantic, open-mouthed kisses as he walked her backwards to his bed. It was nothing like she’d imagined their first time to be. It was uncontrolled, wild, and desperate.

There was fear and love; so much love that she was drowning in it. There was an apology that he was trying to convey through his actions and him begging for forgiveness. His asserting control was him trying to ask her to trust him and trust in him and let him protect her. She tried to project everything back to him, her own message of acceptance.

Jo’s left hand went to the class of her bra and unhooked it as Mycroft moved lower to mouth at the swell of her breasts, eventually flicking a nipple with his tongue. Gasping, the blonde’s fingers carded through his hair, holding his head in place. Nimble fingers moved to the elastic band on her maternity trousers and he slid them down low enough for her to kick the offending fabric off, leaving her in nothing but her underwear.

She let go of him and he found her mouth again, dominating her while she awkwardly undid the button with her injured hand. The sound of his zipper sliding down was obscene in the quiet of the room. As he pressed closer, she could feel his hardness against her thigh and Jo’s good hand darted into his pants to grip him. Mycroft tore his mouth away from her and his head dropped to her shoulder as he groaned in pleasure at her touch. His hips jerked against her seeking friction as he thrust his cock into her hand. She gripped him to still his movements.

“What do you want, Mycroft? Tell me what you want.” She whispered.

His chest heaved and he looked up, the pupils of his gray-blue eyes dilated until only a thin ring was visible. “You. All of you. Anything you’re willing to give and everything you’ll let me take.”

“Right answer.”

She spun both of them around as she stroked him. “Take them off.” She ordered and it was almost comical at how fast he complied. Jo looked down and saw his penis, fully engorged and pointing up towards her, a drop of pre-cum on the tip. He was large, but not too big and absolutely perfect.

One of her hands lifted to cradle the back of his skull while the other held him again to slowly stroke him. She brushed her palm against the tip to gather the moisture and twisted her wrist on the downward stroke and his legs collapsed under him as he sat on the bed. Jo slowly lowered her underwear and saw Mycroft swallow hard at seeing her fully naked. His arm raised to touch her, but she was faster as she climbed onto his lap. She held onto his shoulders to stabilize herself while he gripped her hips. Every hurt faded away in the moment and she focused on him and all that she felt for this wonderful man who was rapidly finding his place in her heart.

Jo could feel his cock rubbing against her inner thigh and she swiveled, teasingly bringing it closer to her entrance before pulling away. Her eyes met his in a silent challenge as she tightened her hold on
his shoulders.

So far, she’d been the one in control and she wanted-no-she needed him to take it from her.

The growl that escaped him made her shiver in eager anticipation as he wrapped his arms around her waist and spun her around to deposit her on the bed with him above her. He settled in between her splayed legs and lifted himself above her to take her in.

Large hands cupped and massaged her breasts. Jo arched her back to encourage the touch. His thumbs brushed her nipples and she closed her eyes as it sent an electric sensation as if it was a direct connection to down there. Her knees tightened around him and she felt herself grow wet.

“Look at me. Look at what you do to me.” He murmured and Jo’s eyes snapped open at his demand. “You’re beautiful.” He looked at her reverently as if she was the answer to all of his prayers.

How could she have ever doubted what he felt for her?

“You’re so strong.” His words of praise seemed to burn themselves into her very skin. He leaned down and pressed open mouth kisses to her skin, worshipping her and gently brushing his palms along her side to rest on her belly where their children were growing inside. “And I love you for that.”

Jo couldn’t do more than moan at his declaration.

Fingers slowly shifted to the v of her legs and parted her folds to rub her clit, her wetness making the touch slick. It was like he’d touched a live wire and Jo jolted with a cry in surprise. She’d read about women being more sensitive during pregnancy, but actually experiencing it was another thing entirely. “Please.” She begged and the bastard had the gall to smirk at her reaction.

He grew more bold in his ministrations, his fingers more insistent as they swirled around her clit and moved to slowly press into her. Mycroft leaned forward, his left hand bracing himself next to her head. His own hips thrust against her, his cock rubbing along the bottom of her stomach.

Jo wrapped her legs around him, angling her lower half to where his member just barely caught her. His touch faltered and Jo smirked right back as he groaned. The glare he sent her way made it worth it and she laughed delighted at her ability to cause this.

He reached back to grip himself and slowly guided himself into her, kissing her and swallowing down her cries at them finally being one. Once he was fully seated inside of her, stretching her in the best way, he stilled and trembled. Mycroft’s mouth opened in an o almost like he was in shock at how it would feel.

“Oh, god, Joanne! You’re so tight. So perfect.” His voice was broken and his face flushed. He looked absolutely wrecked and she knew she looked exactly the same.

She tightened around him and he jerked forward and, even though she felt squashed underneath him, it was wonderful. She’d never had sex without a condom before, but it was a distant thought. She could feel absolutely everything, every inch of him.

Her nails scratched down his back and eventually her hands settled onto his backside, urging and begging him to move. When he pulled back and pushed back in, she moved with him in counterpoint. Jo’s knees tightened around him and he moved faster, his eyes meeting hers and never leaving them. She felt exposed and open in a way that she hadn’t ever been before.

He must have seen it because he became more frantic in his thrusting. Mycroft lifted up and took her
wrist in his hold and went forward again to press them to the mattress. The bold move made
everything more intense. He shoved into her over and over and all she could do was take it.

It felt so good and Jo felt herself clenching around him as a familiar sensation gripped her, spiraling
higher and higher until she finally broke. She cried out in ecstasy as her orgasm crashed into her and
Mycroft released her to clutch her close to him, his own thrusts faltering slightly as her walls fluttered
around him. He quickly started again to chase his own release as Jo became boneless in his hold.

Once, twice, three more times he pushed into her before he stilled with an almost feral growl. She
could feel it as he came inside of her, slower and slower like he was claiming her. He lazily kissed
her, licking into her mouth and she kissed back. Jo rubbed his sweaty back to soothe him and
Mycroft shivered in her arms.

He tilted his head up to look at her and there was such concern lining his face that Jo couldn’t help
the small smile she gave him. “Are you alright? Did I hurt you?”

“No. No, you didn’t hurt me and I know you never would.” The blonde carded her fingers through
his hair and became serious. “You do know I love you, too, right?”

Mycroft closed his eyes and Jo continued to comfort him.

He sighed in relief and slowly pulled out as he softened and lay next to her. Jo shifted closer and
rested her head on his chest. She could hear the wild beating of his heart and closed her eyes to focus
on the sound as it slowed and became steady. That was Mycroft all over. Steady. Always there.

She idly traced the planes of his chest with her right hand, her bandage catching on the sparse hairs.
Mycroft caught it and held it, his thumb running over the backs of her fingers. “I’m sorry.” He
whispered softly.

Jo froze in surprise. She knew a man like Mycroft had never apologized in his life and it shocked
her. He must have sensed her feelings in the matter and he pulled her up to face him. His features
were soft and open as he tucked a strand of her hair behind her ear so she could see him properly.

“I will say it a thousand times in a thousand ways if that’s what it takes for you to forgive me.”

Her lips turned up at the corners and her smile was one of appreciation and empathy. “Oh, Mycroft,
you are an idiot.” The scowl she got from him was epic and she kissed it away. “But you’re my idiot
and I do forgive you. I forgave you last night.”

She lay back down and put her head on his shoulder, her belly pressing up against his side and
Mycroft pulled the duvet over both of them. “I don’t know how to do this.” She admitted.

She couldn’t see his face, but she knew he was frowning in confusion especially when his response
was hesitant and unsure. “What don’t you know how to do?”

“Letting people take care of me. I’ve always been independent and taking care of myself and other
people since I can remember.” She admitted quietly. She was thankful the room was darkened and a
cocoon from the outside world hearing her words.

He sighed and he gave her a squeeze. “I figured that. I don’t know how to do it either. I’m the same.
I’ve always taken care of those I care for and don’t particularly like for others to care for me.”

Jo huffed a small laugh. That was the understatement of the century. “I know. Sherlock hates it.”

“It’s who I am.” He tells her seriously.
“Same here.”

The room was quiet except for the ticking of the clock for a long time and Jo had started to drift when Mycroft’s voice broke the silence. “Maybe we can find a middle ground?”

“I think I can work with that.”

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