As We Fall

by subtext-is-my-division (Quill_A)

Summary

The fact of his pulse,
the way he pulled his body in, out of shyness or shame or a desire,
not to disturb the air around him.
Everyone could see the way his muscles worked,
the way we look like animals,
his skin barely keeping him inside.
I wanted to take him home
and rough him up and get my hands inside him, drive my body into his
I wanted to be wanted and he was
very beautiful, kissed with his eyes closed, and only felt good while moving. 
You could drown in those eyes, I said."

-Richard Siken, Little Beast

Sherlock can understand the poetry of it. Soul mates, eternal love, the gaps between your fingers where another's will fit in perfectly. Such things, however, are meant for people who are whole and unbroken.

Notes

OKAY GUYS I HONESTLY DON'T KNOW WHAT I AM DOING.

So I am finally dipping my toe into the Omegaverse like I have wanted to do for AGES, since my other two fics are almost over. I have a plot thought out for this and everything, so I'm not flailing around and writing whatever pops into my head. (well, mostly) PLEASE tell me what you think, because I've never written an omegafic before and I hope I do it right. Well, in any case, the best part about this trope is that there are LITERALLY NO RULES YAY.

Beware of dubious consent. I mean seriously. Epically dubious consent. And biology issues. Gender roles. (like literally made up biology, I kid you not.) Warnings will be added for each chapter. Please read them carefully before you continue. PM me if you have any questions. :)

Not beta-ed as of now because I was too lazy.

Also, no idea when this fic will be updated. I'll try to be as regular as possible but I've got college starting up and I will be extremely busy but I WILL NOT LEAVE THIS FIC HANGING.
I will be easy company; the blur
Of what I longed for once will fade to space.
No thought that could discomfort you will stir.
My eyes will painlessly survey your face.

- Vikram Seth, *Promise*

Part One: my hands no longer an afterthought

It's the utter weakness of it that Sherlock detests, most of all. The knowledge, or the lack of. It is the fact that he is being stripped of his claim over his own body while 'biological imperative' stamps its ugly bruises across skin that should be his and his alone. He hates the way his mind is shattered to pieces, how he is reduced to pure instinct, bands that tighten their grip across his body and flop him down, gasping like a giant fish caught in a net of self loathing.

*Heatwetwet, wantwantneedneed, please please please.*

A writhing, begging mess, everyone else's to touch and to claim and to fuck.

It's who he is, it's how he's been made, and this is what he hates most of all. He could rip apart his own skin, tear his own hair off, and yet, and yet he will remain the same, nothing will change. He's done it before, he remembers, when he was desperate and frustrated, weeping and pleading for something that he knows he *doesn't want*, not really, he's done it; traced jagged red lines into pale, unblemished skin, pitying himself, hating himself, wanting to die.

It would be better, he always thinks, to die. If only he could. If only he could close his eyes and tell his body, *that's it, I'm done, I don't want this.* But this, this fucking thing, it is already far gone beyond his control, spinning out of his reach, burning and burning and making him scream because this is a thirst that he must quench and yet he hates every moment of it.

*But it's my body,* he defends helplessly.
According to the rest of the world, it isn't, not really.

Hungry eyes follow him, wherever he goes. Lewd, intent gazes that seem to burn holes into his skin when he walks down the street, a shop, the fucking bus stand.

It never stops.

Maybe they're waiting, he thinks. They're waiting for me to get down on my knees and beg them to fuck me. Take me. They know I will, because I can't help it. And he knows, deep down, in the pit of his stomach, that when it happens to him, he'll do whatever they want him to. He won't even think twice. Instinct, pure, primal, basic instinct will have him so far beyond the reach of his intellectual capacity that his legs will spread like an automatic reaction. Flick the switch, and watch the omega squirm.

It must be so much fun for them, he thinks. To watch him struggle. What is it like, on the other side of the wall? That privileged side of humanity where you can walk without the thought nagging at the back of your head that this respite is just a fleeting whisper before the fire consumes you again, burns you until you are charred to a crisp, nothing but a pile of ashes.

He is smart, he reminds himself. He is smarter than the whole lot of them combined. He can pick them apart in seconds, ravage their so called sense of self-respect and dignity, rattle their propriety until they are nothing but a whimpering mess. I can do it, he tells himself. He would, if he wanted, watch them try to stumble and pick up the pieces, what then? How does it feel then?

This venom, this acid, the bitterness of the unfairness of it all, it eats away at him like a plague. It's not healthy, he tells himself, to be jealous of normal, boring people. But then, maybe it's not so bad, being normal. Being different is so exhausting.

The first time it happens, he is barely fifteen.

His limbs have always felt too long on his body, even more so now. His skin feels spread over his bones, thin membrane stretched over his skeleton that could rip at any moment. It would be interesting to see what his body is made of. He knows the science of it, blood and marrow and muscle. Maybe there's something more. Something special. Sherlock has always thought he was better, because he was smarter than everyone else.

Victor had moved in next door barely four months ago, male alpha, and Sherlock was curious. Victor didn't think he was weird. When Sherlock told him that he was conducting an experiment on the effects of citric acid on decomposing pig feet, Victor laughed and ruffled his hair and told him that he was clever. It was nice, hearing that. Someone telling him he was clever. He tried to get people to say it when he was younger. Tried to impress them. He realised too late that broken bones weren't worth the price.

Mummy never said that, she was always tired and exasperated, staying at home, cooking, cleaning. She didn't really need to, Sherlock wanted to tell her. He knows they're wealthy, she could ask the kitchen staff.
"Mother, you are being illogical. We have two cooks who are capable of cooking a decent meal, I fail to see why you must take on the task yourself."

"It's what an omega does, dear. She looks after her family."

What a horrible thing, Sherlock thought. Being reduced to a caretaker because of what lies between your legs.

Victor is seventeen. He wants to study Chemistry at Oxford next year. Sherlock thinks this is a vastly dull thing to do.

"How tedious," he informs him, still managing to lift his chin disdainfully even though he is lying flat on his back in Victor's garden. They're supposed to be watching the clouds. It's perfectly boring, but Victor is the only person Sherlock has ever spoken to in such a long time and he doesn't want to offend him by telling him that.

"It'll be interesting," Victor defends. Sherlock considers his statement dubiously.

"It will be boring," he corrects after a while. Victor thinks for a moment. The sunlight catches in his copper coloured hair.

"I'll just be two years ahead of you, you could study it too, after you graduate," he advises.

Sherlock doesn't know why, but he likes this idea.

"Studying chemistry wouldn't be so bad," he decides.

They lie in silence then, Sherlock composing a piece of music in his head because he likes the weather now, likes the way the cool wind ruffles his hair, the way it plays across his skin. It eases the stiffness of his body, the way his flesh seems to be stretched too tight. Like a string pulled taunt across an instrument. The sound is disjointed if you play it then, it doesn't come out right.

Sherlock hasn't come out too right, either.

At least Victor doesn't call him weird.

It happens suddenly that day, insidious in its ferocity. One moment Sherlock is almost calm and relaxed, breathing summery air while Victor asks him questions time to time, like what he thinks about that murder that happened in Bristol yesterday, or whether he found out how much time it takes for saliva to coagulate after death. The next moment he feels hot, too hot, far too hot. His skin is burning. Is he burning? Fuck, he must be. Sherlock's body gives an odd sort of spasm, and he is suddenly far too aware of everything. There is sweat trickling down his neck, dampness on his forehead, his hairline, burning heat everywhere. His clothes, fuck his clothes, too much, everything is too much.

He gasps, sitting up, suddenly on his fours, his body heaving. Something is wrong, something is very wrong, he thinks, why are my pants wet, why, what is it, oh—fuck. He needs—he needs, needs something—his hand almost instinctively goes to his crotch, it would feel better, if he could just—fuck, his body jerks again. What is this smell, oh my god, want it, want it, crap—Victor—

Victor sits up in a second, Sherlock can't see him, he is dimly aware that his palms and knees are against the grass, his arse raised in the air, and this position, it feels right, something, he needs, he needs, oh god, his hand is still somewhere at his crotch, and he jerks against it, oh bloody hell, it sends a spasm of electricity arching down his spine, he's hard, so hard, he's never been this hard
"Sherlock—oh fuck," Victor is inches away from him, he can smell the thick, heady scent of alpha pheromones rising from his skin in response to his spreading heat, and Sherlock wants, wants him against him, he smells so fucking good, he smells like something Sherlock should have inside of him, rubbing up against him, smearing his scent all over him, claiming him. That sounds good, so damn good, Victor should just grab him—and oh—there is a dull ache somewhere down below, he's barely aware of it, just this horrible burning, and he knows, he knows that if Victor just, if he could just, he'd feel so much better.

Victor does, he jerks, reaches out with his hand and grabs his elbow, making Sherlock lose his balance as his chin hit the grass hard, it must have hurt but Sherlock barely notices it. In a second Victor has his arm around his stomach and Sherlock is in his lap between spread thighs, and Victor is sniffing at his neck, fingers digging into his hip painfully. Sherlock whines, he can feel something hard against his arse, erection, cock, knot, good, need it, need it, please, yes.

"Fucking, fuck, Sherlock, you're, god, fuck, mine, mine," Victor growls, and Sherlock whimpers, a helpless, pathetic sound, the edges of his vision sizzling, red hot, fire, burning, hot, hot; he grinds his arse against Victor desperately, only aware of this aching, blinding need to have Victor inside him, pushing, thrusting-fuck, yes, that's what he needs right now; he throws his head back against Victor's shoulder, exposing his throat, submitting himself, gasping. Victor's lips are around the shell of his ear, sucking, his cock rubbing frantically against his backside, his hand sliding down his thigh, the denim sopping wet and sticking to his skin. It should be uncomfortable, it must be, damn, but he doesn't think of it—why isn't Victor inside him, yet? He should be slamming into him, ripping off his clothes, oh god these clothes, why hadn't he realised before? They are chaffing against his skin, hot, too hot—

And then he feels it, the slice of Victor's teeth against his neck, and it all slams into painful focus then; teeth, bite, bond, wait, fuck no, no no no—

"Get off," he screams, panic flaring in his chest, white-hot arousal still churning between his legs, flames licking his entire body, it's so confusing, he wants it, wants Victor inside him fuck, but, no, no, he doesn't—it's what's going on? What is happening to his body? He's confused, he's so confused, and Victor is reaching for the waistband of his jeans, the touch of his fingers against the fevered bare skin of his hips making him keen like a puppy, a wailing, desperate noise clawing out of his throat while his legs spread wantonly of their own accord. "No, no, I—can't, Victor—don't, please," he gasps, Victor's hand is slipping under his jeans, oh god—

"You smell, damn it, so good, so good, I need to, bloody hell, Sherlock, you never—never told me, I—I'll knot you, fuck, I'll knot you right here, mount you like you want it, you sweet little—fuck—"

Shouts. Someone is shouting, saying something, Sherlock can't hear what they're saying. Rosewater and wildflower mixing with the heavy peach scent of alpha, who is it? Someone, anyone, could take Victor off of him—but, wait, no, no, he wants Victor, wants Victor to pin him down and spread over him and fuck him right here, doesn't he? Oh god, it hurts now, it hurts, he's burning up, someone make it stop, make it stop, please, can't—

"Victor, Victor, stop!" someone is shouting, a female voice, and Victor is wrenched away from him, the cloying heat gone, and Sherlock whines, he actually whines, because why did they do that, why, why, he needed him, needed his knot inside of him—god, yes. He falls limply back, as if the only thing holding him upright were Victor's tanned, sinewy arms. Grass against his back, the bleached blue of the sky above him. Sherlock gasps, another horrible seizure-like thing rocking his entire body, he grinds against the grass, should feel something, please oh god, he's crying, he
registers faintly, sobbing like a baby. There is wetness against his cheeks. The water should evaporate, because his skin is burning hot, it must be.

"Sherlock! Sherlock, get up, get up. Dad! Dad get Victor out," a face swims in front of his vision. Tanned skin, copper hair like Victor. His sister, he thinks, cousin? Someone, but the scent is wrong—omega, not alpha. She's not what he needs right now. But she touches him anyway, wraps her arms around his waist and hauls him up. She's strong, she has him standing upright. Sherlock falls against her side, seemingly incapable of supporting his own weight. His head lolls against her shoulder. She wraps her arm around his waist, and they move. "Lock the gate, what is wrong with you—oi, fuck off!" she shouts at someone behind her.

"I-I can't, don't want—something else," he babbles something incoherently. He doesn't remember. His jeans are cold and sticky, damp, something is still running down his thighs, slippery, warm. The heated edge of his mind clears somewhat, sanity trying to make its pathetic return. Victor's sister is opening a door, and he feels cool air against his damp forehead. He shivers, his legs are freezing because of the wetness.

"It's fine, everything's fine," she tries to soothe him, but how can she soothe him like this, he knows what he needs and he needs it now, because oh god—

"Fuck," he moans, clawing at his abdomen, where a confusing mix of pain and gut-wrenching need sends another spasm rocking his body. It's so bewildering, he remembers thinking, everything is so bewildering. "Please," he hears himself begging. What is he begging for? Someone to fuck him, probably. He knows it will make him better. So certain. A knot inside him and this-this desire, this writhing, messy want will subside. Logic, he reminds himself. It's pure, cold, logic.

"Shhh," she soothes again, and Sherlock wants to claw her eyes out. He might have tried, he doesn't remember. She pushes him inside a room, and there is something soft under his bottom now, springy and light. Bed. Cotton. The clean scent of lemon freshener, her honey-rose fragrance merging with it. Pleasant, but wrong, not what he wants.

"What's happening?" he rasps. "I can't—can't be happening. Don't want it, oh fuck, make it stop, can you make it stop?" he curls his fingers into his sweat-drenched hair, pulls.

"I'm sorry," she tells him, the bright blue of her eyes burning into his own. She sounds genuinely apologetic. "I can't. I'll, Sherlock? Listen. I'll get your brother, he'll take you home. Keep you safe, with your parents. I'm sorry about that, Victor didn't—he didn't mean to, I promise."

"I don't care," he whinges. "I just—just want—fuck this, fuck you," he falls back against the cool sheets, curling into himself, trying to save himself from the heat burning his flesh away. "I don't want this," he whispers, to himself or to her, he doesn't know.

When Sherlock thought he was something special, this isn't what he had in mind.

Somewhere, he thinks, the universe is laughing at him.

He tried to look at himself, he remembers. He wants to see what he looks like, because it feels as if his skin has been ripped off and replaced with something new and unfamiliar, Sherlock runs his fingers down his body, between his legs where it is wet and slippery, since no one else will touch him, right now, even though he begs. He remembers begging, most of all. Sobbing. Sherlock has never cried before, but this time he is reduced to whimpering mess of tears and snot and twisting
need. He hates it, he hates it, hates himself.

It's so hard getting up from the bed, exhaustion has turned his muscles to lead. When he reaches the mirror, the face staring back frightens him. His eyes are wild and feral, eclipsed by black, only a thin ring of grey-blue-green visible behind his enlarged pupils. His hair is insane and tangled, sticking to his damp forehead, sweaty curls plastered to his nape. His cheeks are pink and flushed from fever and his lips are chapped because of how much he has been biting them. The biting helps, helps him from crying out or moaning. It's pitiful, he thinks, he is pitiful, a pathetic, sopping thing that can't even control its own impulses.

Sherlock wills his mind to function again, but another contraction rips through his body and he ends up keening and writhing on the floor instead.

"It can be a confusing time, your first heat," the beta doctor explains. Sherlock wants to throw a vase at him. What the fuck does he know? Instead he chooses to pin him down with his hostile gaze and make him aware of how much Sherlock detests him.

"But it will get better," he reassures him. Runs his hand through close-cropped black hair and levels him with a steady green gaze. Sherlock hates him. "The intensity should decrease by your next time, over time it will stabilize, and you'll be able to control it somewhat." He smiles at him, as if everything is alright, as if Sherlock's life hasn't been turned upside down and shaken of its contents.

"I'm not supposed to control it, though am I," Sherlock counters, allowing the bitterness to creep into his voice. "Because if I could control it then I wouldn't need an alpha to knot me, and then what good would I be, hmm?" he snarls out the last bit, and the doctor flinches.

"Sherlock," Mycroft warns from where he is leaning against the door, surveying the proceedings with detached interest. Sherlock ignores him. The doctor ignores Sherlock.

"I'll write out a prescription for you, these tablets will help with the cramps," he explains, writing down hurriedly on a slip of paper. "Vitamins and supplements, you'll be taking these for about a year—" he drones on and on, Sherlock blocks him out. He doesn't care. Instead he stares outside where rain is pattering steadily against the window.

The door is shut and the doctor leaves. Sherlock is still staring outside, knees brought up to his chin, arms wrapped around his shins. He feels the bed dip as Mycroft sits next to him, his fruity citrus scent wafting up his suddenly far more sensitive nose.

"How do you feel?" he asks.

"Like I've been pounded by a meat cleaver," Sherlock says immediately.

"Poetic," Mycroft observes, and there is nothing except the sound of the rain outside, the steady drip-drip-drip of it on the leaves. Mycroft says nothing, because perhaps there is nothing to say. He came in, a few times, never for more than a minute, fortunately never to the sight of Sherlock humping the mattress. But he never stayed. Being his brother, he wasn't consumed by the all-encompassing desire to fuck him, but it still made him uncomfortable in his presence in a way that he had never been before.

Sherlock hates change.

"You'll be fine," Mycroft says, breaking the silence. "It's not the end of the world, Sherlock, you will
still do the things you do, say the things you say."

Sherlock laughs; a harsh, bitter sound. "You don't even believe that yourself," he scoffs.

"I believe that you won't let something as mundane as biology dictate your life." His fingers drum against his knee.

It's true, Sherlock knows, and an oddly flattering thing for Mycroft to say. But somehow Sherlock can't shake the terrible feeling that the entire universe is tipping on its axis.

"And yet it will," he says, his voice surprisingly even, although he feels the urge to scream and rage and shout. "They won't even notice my brain anymore, it barely matters that I'm more clever than every single one of them. I'm just—just—I don't even know what I am." The idiotic sentiment of the last bit, lashed out in bitterness, frustrates him. Sherlock could claw his eyes out.

"You'll do what you want to do," Mycroft insists. "I'll make sure nobody stops you." Before Sherlock can think of a way to respond to that statement, Mycroft sweeps out the door.

Victor comes a few days after his heat is over.

Sherlock can smell him from upstairs, from where he is bent over the nitric solution, pipette still between fingers. His scent assaults his nose and Sherlock drops the pipette, gripping the edge of his table, hard, until his knuckles turn white.

It isn't arousal, god, not anymore, it's shame.

He feels his cheek heat up with the memory, can hear the sounds of his own whimpers and groans in his ear, the ghost of Victor's mouth against his neck. He doesn't want to see him, doesn't want to be reminded of his own inability, his weakness.

He can hear shouting down below, and curiosity gets the better of him. He opens the door, the metal of the doorknob cold against his fingers. He opens it just a crack, so he can listen to the conversation. He has to strain his ears a bit, no one seems to be shouting anymore.

"You learnt anything in school, Victor? You're hardly a child anymore, I'm sure you're aware of what you're supposed to do in this kind of a situation." Mycroft's voice, firm, cool, polite, cutting through formality like a shard of ice.

"Mycroft, you know how it is, you can't expect him to——" his mother's voice.

"I can expect him to restrain himself from manhandling my brother," Mycroft spits out. "Do you think father would do that, grab an omega that was vulnerable and attempt to rape——"

"I wasn't trying to rape him, the fuck is——"

"Language, Mr. Trevor, or I will escort you out of this house myself."

"I had no idea, you know how it is, you know what happens, Mr. Holmes. I'm just here to apologise,—"

"What I know," Mycroft cuts in, "Is that I can control myself long enough, at least, to get away from him, like any mature young alpha your age would do, and tell someone who would take care of him."
Sherlock closes his eyes and breathes through his nose, the words running over and over in his head. That's it, he thinks, they're already convinced that I can't take care of myself, that I need someone to look after me. Vulnerable. Weak. Helpless.

"—realise it's no excuse, I agree, but at least he's apologising, I think it's only fair to allow him to go, Mycroft. Sherlock wouldn't appreciate—"

"Sherlock would appreciate not having to see him after he attempted to do what he did, mother. But very well. Sherlock is not a child, I'm not going to decide who he can or cannot see. Go, and if he doesn't want to talk to you, turn around and leave or I will have someone escort you out."

He hears mumbled thanks, and shuts the door hurriedly. Listens to the sound of footsteps coming up. His stomach churns uncomfortably. He doesn't want to look at him, he thinks, not because he hates him, but because he will hate himself more if he does.

Mycroft would be one of the very few people to blame Victor for what he did, and he barely did anything at all. But Sherlock shudders when he thinks of what might have happened if his sister hadn't pulled him off.

Knock against the door, Victor's scent; cherries and something like wood. "Sherlock." He doesn't sound like someone particularly remorseful, Sherlock thinks, he sounds like someone who believes himself to be carrying out a great service.

Sherlock's fingers still against the metal. It would be a sign of weakness if he didn't open the door, as if he was ashamed to look at Victor, as if this was somehow his fault.

"Sherlock," Victor calls again, his voice sounding weary.

He opens the door then, and meets his eyes almost defiantly. It's difficult, it feels like a physical thing. But he does it. Victor has always been an inch or two taller than him, he stares down at him, and Sherlock raises an eyebrow in question. Victor's nostrils flare, his pupils dilate only the slightest—Sherlock steps back, to put some distance between them. He doesn't want Victor to think that he is anything near the dripping mess he was a week ago. He is in control of his body now, his mind, if he touches him, Sherlock will punch him, he will.

"Can I come in?" he asks.

Sherlock makes a gesture towards the room, Victor steps in and closes the door behind him. It makes Sherlock uncomfortable, makes the hair at the back of his neck prickle. He says nothing.

Victor raises his head a bit and sniffs the air discretely. His gaze drops back to Sherlock and his eyes rake his body, not slowly or salaciously, but still in a way that makes Sherlock feel oddly exposed, like he is a science experiment laid out for poking and prodding. Victor has never looked at him like this before, like he's something that should be his.

"You smell, god, you smell different," Victor states, running a hand through his copper hair. He's wearing a blue shirt and jeans that lie low on his hips. Sherlock used to think Victor was aesthetically pleasing, he'd wonder fleetingly if his mouth was as soft as it looked. Now he wants nothing more than to back away from him, to flee.

"Glad you noticed," Sherlock says stiffly.

The corner of Victor's mouth twitches. "Good," he clarifies, as if Sherlock is an idiot. "You smell good. Better."
"I smell like something you'd like to fuck," Sherlock spits out, before he can stop himself. But he doesn't regret it.

Victor raises his eyebrows. "I—well." He clears his throat uncomfortably. "You can hardly blame me for that, I mean—you don't know, Sherlock, you don't know what it was like."

Sherlock represses the urge to slap him and instead he snorts disdainfully. "I don't know what it was like?" he snaps. "I was the one going through heat, I was the one reduced to a slavering mess at your feet, and you think I don't know," Sherlock doesn't realise he's come closer to Victor, in his frustration. Doesn't realise until Victor's face is a centimetre away and then he tries to step back in panic, but Victor's fingers encircle his wrist and Sherlock stills.

"It's hard, isn't it?" he asks, his voice soft. "I know, my sister goes through it to." He smiles at him, a pitying smile that Sherlock wants to claw off. "But, you know, I could—I mean, if you wanted me to, I could help you through it. It'll feel better, I promise."

"Get your hands off me." His voice is cold, jagged, like a piece of ice.

Victor leans forward until his nose is in his hair, and he inhales. "When it happens again, you'll come to me anyway, begging for a knot. It happens, you don't have to feel—"

That's when Sherlock raises his elbow and slams it into his face. Victor's fingers fall from his wrist and instead he doubles over, clutching at his nose. Sherlock steps back, rubbing at his arm unconsciously, as if to rid himself of Victor's scent all over him, clinging to his skin like a disease.

"Sherlock, what—" he says, voice muffled against his hand. "I'm only—"

"Get out of my room," Sherlock orders him, his voice steady, looking down at him, wishing for all the world that he would just vanish and leave him alone.

"I—"

"Out."

Victor leaves, and Sherlock feels like he's lost something important, like he's saying goodbye to too many things at once.

Mycroft comes in a few minutes later. He doesn't knock, he never knocks, the world would end before Mycroft decided to knock.

He comes in to the sight of Sherlock throwing a half-empty mug of cold tea against the wall. The pale blue ceramic splinters, light brown liquid staining the cream of the wall.

"Sherlock," he says wearily. The tone of it grates Sherlock's nerves. He's not a wounded animal, not a child that needs to be coddled. He is a person.

"You're wrong," he says, and he's not sure who he's even speaking to anymore. His voice is shaking, he is shaking, tremors running through his body that threaten to overwhelm him. "Everything changes."
As far as first kisses go, all Sherlock is aware of is that it is too much.

Warnings for extremely dubious consent, and almost (but not quite) underage sex. Like don't even look for consent. You won't find it.

Reviews are balm to my tortured writer's soul.

I'm sorry for this chapter. See you all in hell. *cheery wave*

The man on top of you is teaching you how to hate, sees you

As a piece of real estate

Just another fallow field lying underneath him

Like a sacrifice

He's turning your back into a table so he doesn't have to

Eat off the floor, so he can get comfortable,

Pushing against you until he fits, until he's made a place for himself inside you-

The clock ticks from five to six. Kissing degenerates into biting.

So you get another kidney punch, a little blood in your urine.

It isn't over yet. It's just begun.

-Richard Siken
School is a nightmare.

Sherlock has never pined so much for that mask of obscurity, the invisible wall that divided him from everyone else. It used to hurt, he remembers. An odd twinge in his chest from time to time when he realised that he was never going to be like the rest of them. But then it became a part of him, that loneliness, and Sherlock learnt to become numb to it.

Now he longs for it, more than ever. Because now he walks down the hallways and they all lift their gazes and they know. They know what he is, can smell it on him from miles away. They treat him differently now. Like he's someone who needs to be protected, someone who can't take care of himself. They keep touching him all the time, running their hands over him like they are entitled to his body.

He's forced to take that stupid, obligatory Omega Studies class, where he's forced to sit with the other omega students that the school has. They all look at him oddly, a mixture of pity and a dejected welcome to the club.

He's taught that he should feel special, because statistics and percentages make him so.

Thirty five percent. Just a number, Sherlock tells himself.

He's important, a coveted member of society, his biology makes him valuable, like a diamond in dirt. Naturally one of the most important things he's taught is that in future, he will bear children, raise pups, keep the population growing.

"Is this supposed to make me feel better?" Sherlock asks one day. He's sitting in the farthest end of the classroom, in the corner, next to the window. He can't bear to sit next to the others, they smell too much like himself, it gets to you, after a while.

Ms. Pewett squints her eyes to look at him, fixing her glasses. She realises it's Sherlock and gives a great, big weary sigh as if he's the most difficult thing to happen to her today.

"Could you repeat yourself, Mr. Holmes?" she asks him, leaning against the desk in a resigned manner.

"I asked you, is that supposed to make me feel better? The fact that I'm special and important?" He leans back on his heels, arms crossed over his chest, his hair flops into his eyes. The others look at him. The one who has a black dog clears her throat uncomfortably.

"It is every omega's duty—" Ms. Pewett begins her memorised speech but Sherlock scoffs.

"Oh please," he drawls. "This class is pathetic. You're pathetic. We all are. I'm not special, or important. I'm a fucking piece of meat, a machine that's supposed to churn out a child as soon as I reach sexual maturity."
"Mr. Holmes—" Ms Pewett starts in an alarmed tone, her eyes going wide. Sherlock must be breaking so many rules now, crossing so many boundaries. The knowledge of it sends a pleased shiver down his spine.

"You're only telling me what I already know. I should be thankful, I should be grateful," he laughs. Tony Brownstone two rows ahead of him smirks at his desk.

"I'm not," Sherlock says with finality. "And neither are you. Look at yourself. You go home early on Mondays and Thursdays, pick up your children from day care. One of them is a beta, hmhm, lucky girl, oh yes, of course she's a girl, I can smell her on you, and an alpha—yes? No? Don't lie, it's clear as a book. Your mate, she's one of those liberal alphas, she tells you she'll do her share of the housework. That's a lie, and you know it. You do the shopping every morning, I see it when you park your car. You work extra on every other day of the week because you're telling yourself you're contributing to your family, your mate lets you work and you're taking advantage of that, good for you, but you don't need to, not really, she works enough for the both of you, look at the clothes you're wearing. You studied hard enough to be a doctor, you might have specialised in omega care, but that's alright—you teach biology to the sixth years, of course you did—but in the end, it didn't get you anywhere, did it, look at you now." Sherlock's chair comes back to the ground with a hard plonk. He takes a deep breath. The class is still.

"Get out of my class," Pewett says, her voice quiet, the edges of it lined with steel and something unsteady. Her hand is cupped over the edge of the desk, hard. Sherlock can see the blood rush from her flesh, leaving it pale.

"Glad to, it's not like I'm learning anything new," Sherlock replies, standing up and slinging his bag over his shoulder. The chair scrapes against the floor when he brushes past it. He feels the weight of everyone's gaze as he sweeps out the room.

He keeps walking down the corridor, barely aware of where he's going. Someone calls him, he doesn't care, he just walks, until he's outside in the grounds. He drops his bag to the ground, it makes a dull sound when it hits the grass. He leans his back against a tree and tilts his head upwards, inhaling the scent of autumn.

It is just as difficult to breathe.

He slides against the bark until he's sitting, brings his knees up to his chest. The wood scrapes his back, it's slightly uncomfortable, and he feels cold. His jumper is tied around his waist but Sherlock ignores it, instead he leans his forehead against his knees and tries to breathe. He wants to vanish, wants the ground to open up and swallow him whole, leaving no evidence of his existence.

He can hear the sound of leaves crunching underfoot, someone is approaching. He lifts his head and sniffs the air; alpha, obviously. His fingers claw into the fabric of his trousers and his body tenses, preparing to fight. It's not the usual reaction of an omega to an alpha, he supposes. But this time Sherlock wants to be anything but usual.

"Holmes?" a male voice calls. Sherlock screws his eyes shut and exhales. Imbecile, he thinks. If he really wants to find me he might as well use his nose instead of lumbering around like an idiot.

"Oh, there you are," something that smells annoyingly like chocolate wafts up his nostrils. Sherlock doesn't look up, choosing to stare at the tree in front of him, noting the swirls and patterns in the bark, the odd shape of the leaves.

"You shouldn't be here alone," he continues, as if he honestly thinks Sherlock is listening. "It's cold, Fitzpatrick told me to get you back inside."
Sherlock immediately turns to him, lifting his head up so he can look into his eyes. He's on the ground, and Benjamin Turner is looking down at him. The tradition of it sends a prickly shade of shame down his spine, but Sherlock doesn't need to be on his feet to intimidate him. "Fitzpatrick said no such thing to you," he spits, levelling him with a cool glare. Benjamin looks back, his lips slightly parted, one eyebrow raised in response to Sherlock's acidic reply.

"I—"

"Do you think I don't know it's cold?" Sherlock stands up then, he's just as tall as Benjamin, maybe taller. "Are you labouring under the impression that I am an idiot, Turner? Because that insult would apply to you." Benjamin's fingers curl up at his sides, and his eyes narrow, even as a flush creeps up his cheeks.

"You can't talk to me like that, you fr—"

Before he can finish his sentence, Sherlock has his fingers curled at the front of his shirt and he slams him against the tree. His lips pull back from his teeth in a snarl, even as every instinct in his body tells him to let go, stop, stop wrong wrong wrong. "Don't," he spits, and his fingers twist in the cotton. Turner stares at him, his eyes wide, his mouth agape. His hands are spread against the bark, his legs apart.

"I'm only trying to help," he tells him, his voice soft and placating, as if he's speaking to a child. His hands reach out to touch him, as if he is somehow entitled to, and Sherlock recoils, letting him go in disgust.

Turner looks down at his shirt where the cotton is wrinkled and where his legs are still spread against the tree. Sherlock's gaze falls to the same spot and he notes a faint bulge in his trousers. He feels sick, bile rising in his throat. Turner looks up at him to meet his eyes and his lips pull up in a crooked smile. "Wanna help me out?" he asks.

Sherlock's fist slams into his face.

He feels an odd sense of déjà vu, watching Turner double over and moan and clutch his nose. He spits something at him, along the lines of freak or slut or whore, uncreative and unimaginative.

"I'm not your property," Sherlock tells him, as if he stating a fact. "Now go. You'll be late for class. And by the way? The ginger beta who you're attempting to get a leg over? She detests you. It's probably because of your morphine addiction. Or the erectile dysfunction. You ought to get that seen to."

He looks up at him, wiping away the thin tendril of blood running down his nose. Sherlock feels a sense of triumph, looking at the crimson. I did that, he thinks. And at the same moment a faint tremor runs through him as if what he's done is twisted and wrong.

"I'm well enough to shove a knot in you and get you to shut up," Turner spits, "Maybe I will. You will. You'll take it, when I give it to you." He smirks at him again, and Sherlock controls the urge to punch him again. His hand hurts.

After he's gone, Sherlock falls to his knees, rubbing his fingers over his bruised knuckles. He picks up the brittle leaves that are strewn over the grass, crushes them in his fist and watches the wind pick up the brown and red and yellow pieces, scattering them until they're lost once more.

He meets Victor again.
It's been a month since he last spoke to him, a month since everything changed. Sometimes he sees Victor on the street, waiting at the bus stop. Whenever he does, he turns around and walks in the other direction, afraid of what he'll see when he looks into Victor's eyes.

He reminds himself over and over again that it wasn't his fault, it won't ever be. But sometimes he can't stop his fingers from trembling, can't stop the flush creeping over his neck, the memory replaying itself in his mind like a broken tape recorder. Mycroft never explicitly forbade him to meet Victor again, he knows that Sherlock will do whatever he wants to do anyway. But he disapproves of it. Mother doesn't say anything, and father wasn't told about it.

He's thinking about him, that day, when he's curled up in bed in one of those rare bouts of lethargy. He's not due for another month, at least, so he knows it's not the result of upcoming oestrus. Sunlight filters through the window, rain washed and bright. *Advanced Forensic Science* lies open next to him, the pages fluttering a bit in the breeze. Sherlock wonders if this is what loneliness feels like.

He can smell him, when he comes. The familiar scent in the air, cherries and wood. It used be an oddly comforting smell, something he associated with acceptance and safety. Victor wasn't his friend, because he doesn't have friends, but he was *something*, at least. Now he feels uncertainty and confusion and the faint metallic tinge of fear. Victor knocks on his door and Sherlock tells him it's open, and he comes in.

Sherlock doesn't look at him, although he wants to.

"Hi," Victor says, his voice cautious and soft. Sherlock sighs, getting up, his dressing gown slipping off his shoulder in the process. He combs his fingers through his hair, blinks at Victor. He's leaning against the closed door, his mouth turned up in a reproachful smile.

"Yes." That's all Sherlock says. It could mean anything.

"I-uh—how are you?" Victor walks forward and sits down on the edge of the bed, Sherlock's socked feet brush his thigh.

"Fine."

"How's school?" Victor asks. His gaze flicks down to Sherlock's mouth, but it's all very quick. If Sherlock wasn't Sherlock he might not have even noticed.

His chest still feels oddly tight.

Sherlock doesn't say he hates it more than ever, that when he gets top marks in assignments there's surprise where there wasn't any before. He doesn't say that people notice him too much now, for all the wrong reasons. He doesn't say that sometimes he wishes he could disappear.

"The usual."

"That's good," Victor says. Sherlock rolls his eyes and gets off the bed, the dressing gown slides down the length of his body from where it was bunched up under him. He stands at the desk, rearranging the microscope slides. He feels Victor's gaze on him seven inches away.

"Uh, listen," he clears his throat uncomfortably. Sherlock is looking intently at the polished wood, but he can hear the groan of the bed springs as Victor gets up and stands next to him instead. "I came to return something to you, it's been at my place for ages."

Sherlock turns to him, then, raising an eyebrow in question. Victor studies him for a second, a flash of uncertainty across his face. He digs in the pocket of his jeans and takes out a CD. It's in a simple
plastic case, *Sherlock* written across it in permanent marker.

"You left it there, last time, um," Victor fidgets. Sherlock looks at him, unimpressed, but takes the CD from him. His fingers brush against Victor's.

"I get it. Thank you," he replies stiffly, sliding the CD into the pocket of his dressing gown. He purses his lips and looks expectantly at Victor.

"Anything else?" he asks.

"Uh—no, not really. I just." He runs a hand through his hair, a nervous gesture that Sherlock recognizes.

Sherlock cocks a hip against the desk and stares intently at him. "Yes?"

"You know I'm sorry, right?" he says, putting his palm on the desk so his fingers almost touch Sherlock's hand. "About what I said, last time."

Sherlock is aware of how close his skin is. "You don't need to," he says coldly. "My mother made that perfectly clear."

Victor licks his lips. "Yeah, but still. I shouldn't have—said what I did. I'm sorry."

"Okay."

"Sherlock, I—I mean it. You know I like you, right?" Suddenly Victor is a bit too close. Sherlock can smell too much of him, the cherry scent of him, sweet and tart.

"What?" he asks, genuinely confused. He feels sweat trickle down his neck.

"You. I like you. You're...different. Good." Victor's eyes travel down to his throat and swiftly back up, resting for a moment on his mouth before he meets his gaze again. Sherlock feels hot and a little bit trapped, even though Victor isn't restricting his movement in any way.

"I...okay?" Sherlock's voice wavers, and he's not quite sure why. *I like you*, the words ring in his ear. No one has said that to him before, and Victor has never...never given any implication that he thought of Sherlock in that way, he was older, wasn't he? Victor was older, and except for that day...he had never. Sherlock tries to deduce something about this conversation. Is this a joke? It must be a joke.

"Hey," Victor says, and he cups his hand behind his nape. Sherlock swallows, his eyes locked on that little scar at the corner of Victor's mouth. It's pale and faded, and disappears when Victor smirks. "You're thinking too much."

Sherlock frowns at him. Why is that a bad thing?

But then Victor has his lips pressed against his own, and Sherlock stops thinking for a second.

*Oh.*

His mind feels pleasantly empty. He was right, though, Victor's lips are as soft as he thought they would be. Should he push him off? Say something? Part his lips and let Victor slide his tongue into his willing mouth?

His hand grips the desk harder, and he feels Victor cradle the back of his head, one hand pressed against his hip at where the hem of his t shirt meets the waistband of his pyjamas. He twists them
around until he has him crowded against the desk, the rim digging into the small of his back. Sherlock doesn't know what to do with his hands so he just keeps them clutching at the desk.

"Open your mouth," Victor whispers against his lips, so Sherlock does, and the warm, wet slickness of Victor's tongue slides inside and Sherlock tastes something heady and intoxicating. He doesn't kiss back, he doesn't know how, Sherlock has never been kissed before; he tries to concentrate on keeping himself standing upright so he can properly feel the press of Victor teeth against his bottom lip. Victor gives a soft growl of approval and curls his hands into his hair, tugging at it so Sherlock tilts his face upwards, giving Victor better access to his mouth. Sherlock's eyes are closed and he can smell Victor's arousal mingling with his own, can feel the wetness between his legs. Victor presses him harder against the desk, his hand at the small of his back, lying a little too low on his waist. He slots a leg between Sherlock's and grinds, slightly, and Sherlock feels his hips roll of their own accord, a choked gasp making its way out of his mouth.

As far as first kisses go, Sherlock is just aware that it is too much.

Victor pulls away, and Sherlock calculates that he has been kissed for approximately forty nine seconds. He feels Victor nuzzle at his throat, inhale his scent, his erection nudging between Sherlock's legs. His ears are buzzing and his nape is damp, as are his pyjamas. What is one supposed to do in these situations? Sherlock isn't sure. He loosens his grip on the desk and the blood flows back.

"You smell amazing," Victor murmurs, pressing his lips against his pulse. "Was that good? Did you like it?" His knee brushes his crotch and Sherlock bites his lip to prevent the moan, unable to stop the pleasure curling tightly in his belly. "You did, you're wet," Victor observes, and raises his head, smirking at Sherlock. Sherlock raises his hands shakily and presses them to Victor's chest, pushing him away. He feels his cheeks flush in embarrassment, and he looks away, down at his feet, ignoring the wet spot on his pyjamas, trying to find equilibrium again. His legs feel weak, his head oddly light. He can't even blame it on the unavoidable biology of his body, not this time, this time it's a lapse on his own part.

Damn it, he wants Victor to kiss him again. Sherlock doesn't like wanting. It makes him too human.

He's still close, the push doing close to nothing. His hands fall away from his hips and he slides them into his pockets instead. "Hey, it's alright, you—"

"This doesn't change anything," Sherlock says, looking at him.


"Okay," Sherlock responds, and then turns away from him, choosing to look outside the window instead of Victor's flushed face and untidy hair. The sunlight blinds him slightly.

He feels Victor lean forward behind him and brush his hair away from his nape, pressing a kiss against the skin before he hears the door shut as he leaves.

Sherlock raises shaking fingers to his mouth and touches the still-sensitive skin. He thinks of hand holding, of fluffy clouds and dark storms that destroy everything in their path.

He can smell Victor on himself, and he hates it.

He meets him again, and again, and again, and Victor snogs him at every chance he gets—or wraps a hand around his cock and makes him come, shivering and gasping while he whispers filthy things
in his ear. His family visits Victor's parents for dinners and Victor drags him into his room and Sherlock opens his lips around Victor's cock and lets him fuck his mouth. "No one knows you're here," Victor says, "No one knows you're in my room, on your knees with my cock down in your pretty little mouth, and oh—fuck yeah, like that—don't know what a good little—fuck—cock sucker you are—" Sherlock pretends it arouses him and pushes his hand into his pants to get himself off. It gags him and chokes him but he does it, because afterwards Victor will kiss him and tell him how good that was, and just for a few minutes Sherlock won't feel completely alone.

His door is closed, and Chopin is playing from inside. Sherlock closes his eyes for a second and listens. It calms him. Makes him feel sad, and that makes no sense, so he ignores it. He raises a fist to knock on the door, but Victor opens it before he can, leaning against the rim of the door and smiling at him lazily. "You came."

"I—" Sherlock licks his lips. "Yes, I suppose."

"Mmm, thought you would," Victor says, and pulls him inside, locking the door behind him. The music swells. Piano concerto no.2 in F minor.

His room is still the same. Sherlock hasn't been here since his sixteenth birthday last month. The posters on the wall, the desk strewn with his i-Pod headphones and open notebooks. The wardrobe, he knows, must be empty, the bed is stripped.

"When are you leaving?" he asks. He is aware of Victor standing behind him, a bit too close to comfort, and yet the proximity is...nice. It's confusing. It's always confusing when it comes to Victor.

"In an hour," Victor answers, and he leans forward, nose in his hair, inhaling deeply. Sherlock stills, his jaw tightening, an odd swooping sensation in his gut.

"I'm going to miss you," Victor says, his hand sliding down Sherlock's side, his palm warm over the thin t-shirt. Perhaps not the smartest thing to wear in autumn, Sherlock thinks. He shivers. But whether from cold or reluctant arousal, he doesn't know.

"I—I'll miss you too? That seems like the sort of thing that one is expected to say in these situations, but would it be truthful? He'd be rather relieved, he decides, yes, perhaps he'll miss him, in a way, he'll miss the easy slip-and-glide of their relationship before biology wrenched it from him. This, though, whatever this is, he doesn't know what to feel about it.

"You're freezing," Victor muses, his fingers grazing the cold skin under his t-shirt. His fingers are warm. Sherlock shivers again. "Should have wrapped yourself up, hmm, wouldn't want you to get sick."

"Common cold, acute viral rhinopharyngites. Caused by coronavirus or rhinivirus," Sherlock babbles. Victor hums. "Very good," he says, his tone amused. Then he places a hand a bit more forcefully on his hip and turns him around. Sherlock swallows in surprise. Victor is in front of him now, looking down at him only slightly (because now it's only an inch of a difference. Just an inch) the familiar smirk on his lips. Sherlock feels his crotch tighten uncomfortably under the onslaught of Victor's aroused gaze, just as Victor raises a hand and brushes his thumb across Sherlock's bottom lip. It's an intimate gesture, one that sends a shiver of arousal down his spine, inciting a sudden desire to get down on all fours for Victor, present himself like a piece of meat. He pushes the feeling down, and Victor cups his chin and kisses him.

Sherlock lets out a soft moan at the press of his lips, which Victor takes as encouragement and slips
his tongue inside, running his palms down Sherlock's sides to wrap around his waist. Sherlock's hands are cramped against his chest, and he opens his mouth wider, lets Victor taste him and slide a hand down to his arse to squeeze. He chokes back a gasp and Victor presses himself harder against him, erection digging into Sherlock's stomach.

"Vic, I don't think—" he murmurs, but Victor just tangles his fingers into his hair and tugs his head backwards, biting down softly on his lip. "Ah, fuck," Sherlock whimpers, and Victor starts pushing them back, until he's pressed up against his desk.

Victor pulls harder at his hair, tugging his head back so he can get to his neck, sucking and biting at the taunt skin. It stings a bit, but Sherlock can't help but gasp and arch up to his touch, spreading his legs wider and letting Victor stand between his thighs and rhythmically rut against his growing erection. He groans softly, Victor pushing his shirt up so he can run his hands down the fevered skin, pinching his nipples while he humps his thigh, Sherlock squirming underneath him, barely able to hold back his moans. It arouses him, if the wetness in the seat of his jeans is anything to go by, and it's nice, maybe not the kissing itself, but being wanted like this by someone, wanted enough for him to slip his hands under your shirt and touch you like this.

He hooks both arms underneath his arse and pulls him up, seating him on the desk like a child, moving in between spread legs and placing his warm, wet mouth underneath his ear. Sherlock is panting, knuckles white from gripping the desk, wanting to touch Victor, to curl his fingers in his hair but Victor will scoff at the gesture, so he just spreads his legs a bit more and lets Victor roll his hips against him, while he throws his head back and keens, pretty sure he's going to come just from Victor rubbing his cock against him. Victor lifts his shirt off and throws it on the floor.

"Never been fucked before, have you?" Victor whispers into his ear, fingers moving to the fly of his jeans to pull it down. Sherlock feels panic/curiosity/no no/yes yes yes yes and bites his lip, shaking his head at Victor because he's too afraid of what his voice will sound like if he speaks.

Victor groans in response, his breath hot and humid against his neck, pulling his jeans down and off his ankles. Sherlock's erection tents against his boxer's obscenely and Victor palms it, making his hips jerk off the bed, a whimpery gasp wrenched from his lips. "I'm going to fuck you," Victor announces, moving back so Sherlock can look into his eyes, pupils wide and cheeks flushed with arousal, tanned hands still moving lazily down Sherlock's prick, "You'd like that, wouldn't you?" Sherlock's eyes flutter and his hips rock against Victor's fist.

"I don't know," he wants to say. Could you kiss me first?

"Please," he says instead, and Victor's lips pull up in a crooked smile, and Sherlock's boxers are pulled off of him before he can change his mind, and Victor's heated gaze is running over his naked body like something that's about to be devoured and Sherlock doesn't know if feeling like a trapped bird is conductive to this kind of thing.

I want it. I do, he thinks. Or at least my body does. It should be enough. There's slick running down his thighs and his skin feels fevered and his heart rate is high, certainly these are all signs that his body is telling him, Let's let Victor Trevor ruin us, and Sherlock wants to be wanted and this is all he'll ever have of that, so he allows Victor to pull him down from the desk, turn him around and press him against it instead, knocking his legs apart with his knee and holding his head on the surface of the table, keeping him in place.

Sherlock can't move, Victor's body is pressed against him, fingers tangled in his hair, wood pressing hard against his cheek, Victor's hand moving down to his arse to give it a squeeze. He writhes underneath him and Victor says, "Don't move," so he tries to, he does, but he feels uncomfortable and hot and like a butterfly pinned against a display case for everyone to examine and this doesn't
feel right even though it should.

"God, I've wanted you like this since forever," Victor breathes; Sherlock can hear the rasp of his zipper and then the heavy, demanding weight of Victor's cock against his arse, and he doesn't know what to do, or how to do it, whether laying there and waiting to be fucked is such a good idea after all, especially when Victor is using nothing more than his own slick to open him up.

Sherlock gasps, the sensation of Victor's fingers inside him not so pleasant after all, mainly because he's not in heat and they should use lube, and because Victor is moving too fast and he's not giving him time to adjust, Sherlock hasn't had sex before and he knows the mechanics of it, but this is new and unfamiliar and if only Victor would slow down a bit Sherlock would try to be good for him, because he doesn't want to end up being another cross-out on Victor's list of conquests. He wants to be special, he wants to be remembered, he wants to be more than a moaning, keening omega under the heavy press of Victor's body.

Or maybe that's just the hormones talking.

"Look at you, all spread out for me like a good little whore," Victor bends down to whisper in his ear, lips pressing against his neck, fingers moving relentlessly in and out. Sherlock's knees buckle and his lips are chapped and rough from the unforgiving edge of his teeth. "God, I've wanted to fuck you for ages," he says, "You'd come here all neat and pretty, good little schoolboy and I wanted to fucking ruin you, you know? And that day—god that day—you were on your hands and knees and you have no idea what I wanted to do to you—and you would have taken it, begged me for it—fuck, Sherlock, look at you," and then his fingers are finally gone, and Sherlock tries to move, but then Victor's hands are on his wrists, pinning him down like a prisoner, his cock teasingly brushing his entrance before plunging right in.

Sherlock almost screams, it's too tight and it hurts and his cock is lying hard against his belly which means he's aroused but this is all so uncomfortable and Victor groans from above him, his hips going roll, snap, roll snap, a rhythm that's fast and rough and sex is supposed to be good and pleasurable but this is neither.

Sherlock whines, fingers wriggling in Victor's grasp, and Victor probably takes it for arousal, because he moves quicker, saying, "You like that, yeah? You like this? Fuck. Fuck, Sherlock, you're so tight, fuck you feel so good, yeah, yeah," and Sherlock is bent over the desk with his hands clamped above him, legs shaking from the force of Victor's thrusts, slick gushing between his legs and his cock throbbing; there are tears in his eyes and it's funny how the slow trickle of salt water down his cheeks distracts him from Victor ploughing at him from behind; he wants to wipe it off but he obviously can't move until Victor is done with him so he tries to enjoy it but it's a little difficult.

"Shhh, don't want Mother to hear us, now, do we?" Victor growls behind him, and Sherlock bites his lips but it's hard to keep quiet.

After a minute or so, Sherlock can just about tolerate it and he doesn't feel like moving anymore, instead he pushes his arse against Victor's cock and moans, rubbing his own prick against the desk. He'd like it if Victor let go of his wrists so he could get himself off, but Victor sounds too far gone to even care, he's grunting and groaning behind him, stretched over Sherlock and biting down on his shoulder like an animal. He'll be marked by tomorrow, he thinks, bruised with bites like he has a possessive alpha boyfriend. He'll be stinking with Victor's pheromones, scented like a mate and he wants to gag at the idea.

Instead he screws his eyes shut and lets Victor fuck him.

Afterwards, Victor pulls away and he winces, because it hurts, but he hopes he didn't see that. The
sudden absence of contact makes him unsteady, and he has to wait for a few seconds before the faint trembling of his body subsides. He can hear Victor behind him doing up his jeans, the rasp of his zipper against metal. Sherlock's own fingers are shaking, and he can't fathom why, because he's not scared, why should he be scared? It makes no sense for his body to be acting this way.

He pulls his pants and his jeans up, even though they are sticky and cold, but he doesn't have anything else to wear. He stares insistently at the poster on the wall as he buttons himself up, not looking behind him, fingers still shaking. He pulls his t-shirt on, at least it's dry. His cock still strains uncomfortably against his jeans, Victor hadn't really fucked him long enough for both of them to come, but Sherlock supposes it doesn't really matter. He wills the erection to go away, thinking of the rat he's dissecting in his room. Behind him the bed springs groan as Victor sits on the bed. The bed. Why couldn't they shag on the bed? It would have been more comfortable that way. Sherlock's cheek still hurts. He turns around, fingers still brushing the spot, and Victor is sprawled on the bed, legs apart, smiling at him lazily.

"Was that...enough." Sherlock clears his throat, and asks him again, "Was that good enough?"

Victor frowns at him for a second. "What?" Sherlock ignores the sinking feeling in his stomach and asks him again.

"I—" he doesn't really care anymore. He feels filthy and his arse hurts and his wrists hurt and he doesn't care that Victor will probably forget about this by the time he's in Oxford.

"Oh. That," Victor laughs. "Yeah. Definitely. You should look at yourself right now, pretty little omega roughed up after a good fucking," he smiles crookedly like he's made the funniest joke possible but all Sherlock wants to do is dig his fingers into his shirt and shake him and ask him why he had to ruin everything. "Well. I ought to get on then." He checks his watch. Sherlock is still looking at the bed, wondering if it would have been nicer there, on his back, wrapping his legs around Victor as they rocked against each other. Maybe Victor could have whispered something nice in his ear. Maybe he could have wrapped his arms around neck. Maybe Victor wouldn't hurt him so much like that.

Victor follows the line of his gaze. "Oh," he says. "Well, we couldn't have gotten the mattress dirty."


Something cracks inside Sherlock. He can feel it like a fissure, fault lines erupting on every inch of skin, the tight membrane of his skin breaking apart. Suddenly he can't breathe.

"I—" he swallows. "I should go. I—have a safe trip." God, he sounds like a child. He's not a child.

He runs out of the room.

Down the stairs, trying to get out of the house as quickly as possible. His cheeks are burning. His clothes are sticky. He smells like cherries, it's awful.
Rubatosis

Chapter by Quill_Angel

Chapter Summary

He really does have a knack for loving the things that will tear him apart, in the end

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

You love the city, when you love each other.
And when you wake up in a city that you don't recognize,
and the traffic lights blink angry,
it is not because the city has grown cold.
It is not because your hands no longer fit in his.
It is because it is someone else's turn to lean
out her window into the cold cold morning and say,
Baby, look at all those traffic lights, blinking their way into dawn.
- Sarah Kay, For Fanny

"Suppressants," Sherlock snaps at him as soon as he is inside. The door slams shut loudly behind him. Mycroft is seated at his desk, signing increasingly dull government documents and doesn't give the slightest indication of having noticed him.

"Are illegal," he responds after a few seconds, and then looks up, placing his chin on interlaced fingers. His nostrils flare slightly at his scent, but he doesn't do anything else. Unlike Natalia Palmer. The memory makes him feel vaguely ill.

Sherlock crosses his arms. "Not all of them."

"You can't take suppressants until you reach sexual maturity," Mycroft picks up his pen again and continues to sign. He sounds like every bloody orange coloured pamphlet on omega sexual health and Sherlock has a strong urge to wrench the expensive fountain pen from his grasp and stab him with it. Repeatedly. "I take it you had an interesting day at school. You might as well have restrained yourself. Graduation is in what, a week?"
Sherlock scowls, stalking forward and tumbling into the chair opposite Mycroft's desk. He can smell Mycroft better like this, and he inhales deeply, involuntarily. He feels too warm. When he brings his fingers to his neck to undo the top two buttons of his shirt his skin is feverish.

"I—" he stops. Loses track of his sentence. Mycroft looks up, then, grey eyes sharp with concern.

"I don't care," Sherlock spits out, although that hadn't been what he originally planned to say. "She's hateful and I gave her what she deserved. And don't change the subject. I need suppressants, and don't pretend you can't procure them for me. I'm sick of this."

"Sherlock," Mycroft says wearily, and Sherlock detests that tone. He wants to strangle that tone and stab it with Mycroft's fountain pen. "Going through your heats naturally is healthy. Suppressants are not. They have side effects. Infertility. Weight loss. Nausea. And they're terribly expensive." He taps the pen against the desk, and the sound grates unpleasantly against his ears.

"Don't pretend, Mycroft, it doesn't suit you," Sherlock hisses. "And I don't care if they make me bloody infertile. Do you think I give a fuck about whether I'll be able to pop out a few pups in a couple of years? Or perhaps you and father care? Because how on earth will I land an Alpha when I can't even get pregnant—"

"For God's sake," Mycroft finally snaps, putting his pen down and glaring at Sherlock. "It's for your own good. Wait a few years, you can get a limited amount of them regularly, and you'd only have to go into a heat once a year or so. Taking them while you're still young, it's not—"

"Fine," Sherlock says brusquely. "I can get them illegally. You know I can. And illegal suppressants will do far worse things to my body, as you know."

Mycroft looks furious. Sherlock enjoys it immensely. The government documents lay forgotten as he raises a hand to run it through his hair. "And how are you going to pay for them?"

"I have a trust fund." 

"To which I can cut off your access very easily."

"I'm sure I can use my natural charms to my advantage," Sherlock allows himself a crooked smile.

Mycroft's lip curls in disgust. "Sherlock, you cannot—"

"Well," he replies brightly, getting up. "This conversation has been delightful. Do come visit, Mycroft. You know how mummy misses you." His exit is dramatic, which is good, but he could have argued for longer, if only Mycroft hadn't been smelling increasingly...pleasant. Sherlock's fever is beginning to spike and there is a dull ache in his belly. If Mycroft won't be able to supply him with suppressants, he'll have to find another way to procure them. A distasteful prospect, definitely. But he won't be able to nick cash from Mycroft, and breaking into the trust fund, or his father's bank account, for that matter, wouldn't be possible without Mycroft finding out.

Benjamin Turner, as it turns out, has access to a variety of illegal substances. Sherlock knows this without asking anyone, naturally.

He doesn't know how to confront him. How to ask. The dull pain in his belly has spread to his thighs and his groin and now his head hurts as well. Outside it is freezing but Sherlock can't bring himself to wear his jumper. Most omegas would take the few days of pre-heat off, but Sherlock refuses to. He doesn't need to coddle himself, not when everyone else takes care of that so admirably.

He watches them playing rugby for a while, Benjamin Turner and his friends. He leans against a tree
and breathes in cool air and tries to recite the entire periodic table under his breath, to distract himself from his unusually fast heart rate and the tingling feeling in his crotch. When they're done, they stumble into the showers, laughing at lewd jokes and punching each other. Sherlock waits outside the locker room for a few seconds, reminding himself that the mingled scent of sweat and mud and grass and alpha/alpha/alpha isn't good, isn't supposed to make him feel anything other than mild disgust. Perhaps it isn't such a good idea to walk right into a roomful of testosterone-filled alphas just off the high of a rugby game, right on the verge of his heat. But Sherlock's head hurts and his limbs are weak and if only he could get a few suppressants, and Benjamin Turner will be able to provide him with some, and what does anything else matter?

So he takes a deep breath and walks in, and the smell grows stronger, as if it has suddenly been amplified by a thousand times, filling his nose and sending messages to his lizard brain that every person in this room is a potential mate. As soon as he is inside, all of them look up and their gaze zeroes in on him, and it's not supposed to feel good. But it does, and Sherlock can't help it.

"Why, hello there," Patrick Rowland says immediately. He wiggles his eyebrows at Sherlock. The rest of them laugh loudly. "Can we help you?"

"I need Turner," Sherlock spits. He raises a hand to push his hair back. His fingers come away damp.

"Need?" Rowland repeats suggestively, and someone gives a lewd wolf whistle. Sherlock's fists curl at his side and he says again, "Someone fetch him for me, please."

"Alright, then, Holmes," one of them answers, turning around. Beta. "Oi, Turner! Sherlock Holmes needs you, apparently—wonder what he needs you for, eh?" He winks at Sherlock as he says so, and Sherlock feels his stomach roll. Someone wraps an arm around his waist, palm burning against his hip.

"I could give you what you need," he mocks into his ear, and Sherlock can feel him; shirtless, next to him, in nothing but a towel, sweaty and smelling of—fuck, what is that? Rum, he sells like rum—and why in God's name does that not seem like a ridiculous notion, because it is, Sherlock wouldn't touch this cretin with a six-feet pole. He elbows him away. "Fuck off," he snarls.

"Ooooh," Mark whistles from behind him. "Better not touch him, then, mate, he obviously wants Turner only..."

This was a stupid idea, Sherlock thinks, fucking stupid, he's an idiot—what on earth is he doing here? Walking into an alpha locker room, what did he expect? He'd be treated with politeness and respect instead of automatically being groped? What an ideal world that would be. He gives a frustrated, angry sigh, shoves Ian McKinnon away and starts to leave when he hears Turner's voice, "Holmes? What do you want?"

Sherlock stills, turns around. "You. Yes. I need a word with you."


He shrugs, and Sherlock gets out of that stifling locker room to the corridor outside, where it is cooler, without the thick scent of alpha pheromones in the air strangling his ability to think straight. Now it is only Turner, standing in front of him, hair wet from a shower and the collar of his shirt slightly damp. Sherlock chooses not to fixate on that.

Turner leans against the wall and raises an eyebrow at him. "Go on, then." His gaze drops to Sherlock's mouth and even further below, and his pupils dilate slightly. But he doesn't touch him. Maybe he's learnt his lesson. Maybe he knows Sherlock is capable of decapitating him in eighteen
different ways at this particular moment.

"Somewhere people can't hear us," Sherlock finds himself saying, and Turner raises an eyebrow.

"You can't be serious," he laughs.

Sherlock rolls his eyes. "I am attempting to have a civil conversation with you, Turner, please don't turn everything into a proposition."

Turner smirks at him and then his fingers circle his wrist. Sherlock looks down at the calloused fingers around his wrist and his pulse jumps a bit, but he doesn't pull Sherlock closer, instead leading him further down the corridor and opening a door on the side.

"This classroom isn't used much. We won't be disturbed." He says this without a suggestive wink or a crude comment, but Sherlock notices the way his eyes grow dark and the subtle way he adjusts his trousers.

"Let's not pretend I won't break your arm if you try and touch me," Sherlock informs him, closing the door shut and turning around to face him. Turner's eyebrows are raised, but he nods like he finds Sherlock amusing and pulls out a chair to sit.

"So what do you need?" he asks conversationally. "Coke? I don't do meth, just to be upfront. But I can—"

"Suppressants," Sherlock says calmly.

Turner stops. "Oh." He says.

"Well?" Sherlock prompts.

"They won't be too hard to get. I know a bloke. But, uh, are you sure? I mean, they're not very—"

"Just tell me," Sherlock replies shortly.

"Can you pay for them?" he asks dubiously. He crosses and uncrosses his legs. The proximity to Sherlock is getting to him, then. "I know you're rich, but suppressants don't come cheap."

The back of Sherlock's head is throbbing. "I...I don't have money," he answers.

Turner stares at him. "You're fit and everything, Holmes, don't get me wrong, but I can't give them to you for free." He adjusts his trousers for the third time, choosing to stand up then.

Sherlock starts to panic. This is not going the way he had planned. Then again, what exactly had he planned? He'd ask for suppressants and Turner would conjure them out of thin air? Give some to him and ask for nothing in return? He is standing far too close to Turner, he registers.

"There must be something," he says desperately. His voice takes on a strained edge.

Turner's eyes go impossibly dark. Sherlock regrets his words immediately.

"Yeah, I'm sure there's something," he replies, smiling crookedly at him. He steps closer. Chocolate. He smells like chocolate, and Sherlock involuntarily licks his lips. Ridiculous.

"No," Sherlock says it loud. Loud enough for it to be clear, precise, definite. No, I will not let you fuck me for suppressants. No, I mean it. I mean it, I mean it.
"I haven't made an offer yet," he says.

"You don't need to. I am not an idiot, unlike you. The answer is no." He steps away from him until his back against the door, but Turner steps closer, like one magnet to another, and suddenly Sherlock is aware that he is in front of him, trapping him effectively, and all Sherlock has to do is reach down and turn the door handle, get him off—

"Then why did you bring me here, to this empty classroom, where no one can hear us," he uses his fingers to air quote the words, "to ask me for drugs? Fucking tease."

Sherlock never planned this, he didn't, he didn't. He didn't think at all, really, and therein lies the problem, the entirety of his predicament. His body feels too hot for him to think, and his hand is too sluggish in moving towards the handle, because Turner grabs it quite easily and pins it above his head. Sherlock could knee him in the groin. Right now.

"Calm down, I'll get them for you. You just need to say the word," he says. His words are cloying and sweet, leaving his mouth in a rush of air that feels acidic against the damp skin of his neck. Sherlock bites his lip.

"I don't want them," Sherlock lies. He wants them desperately.

"Then what do you fucking want, you bloody cock tease," Turner bites out, and then his mouth is on Sherlock's, parting his lips with his own and wielding his tongue like a weapon. Sherlock immediately uses his knee to knock him off and shoves him with his hands so he falls.

"Do you honestly only think with your cock," Sherlock spits at him, and wrenches the door open, leaving Turner on the ground moaning and clutching his groin.

He leans against the wall outside, cradling his head. It hurts. He has graduation next week. Not that he cares. He doesn't. But mummy kept asking him the date and he kept snapping at her because how many times am I to tell you, mother, but it meant that she wanted to come; that she would emerge from her eternal self-pitying long enough to.

Sherlock turns around and locks the door and walks down the corridor and hopes Turner is never able to open it, and he dies in that room, withered corpse all that remains of him.

The suppressants arrive in non-descript brown packaging the next day. With a note from Mycroft.

Don't be stupid. MH

How typically Mycroft, Sherlock snorts, and rips the brown packing away to get to the bundle of blister packs tied together. He counts them all. 60 pills. They are enough to last him for a little more than a year. If he lets himself go into heat once, maybe, two years. Sherlock downs one with his tea at night just as prescribed and promptly spends the next six hours hunched over the toilet, feeling as if he is puking out his internal organs.

"You shouldn't do this to yourself," his mother says, standing at the door. "It's terrible for you, dear, you won't be able to find a—"

"Go away," Sherlock croaks, and retches once more.

But he smells like himself, and nobody paws him during graduation, and his body feels like his own again. He leaves school feeling almost happy, because he never has to see these people again, it's over, it's over.
London isn't boring.

London is loud and vibrant and cold and everything is in a constant state of flux. It seems like what the inside of his head would look like, and Sherlock wraps the musical absurdity and beauty of the city around himself like a thick, smoky blanket, and lets himself get lost in it.

It feels like home, and he thinks to himself, *I'm going to live here someday*. Maybe as soon as he starts university, this autumn. In the city you can't see the stars, which is a pity, because Sherlock likes them. He can't name them, doesn't really care about the details, but the poetry of it; yes, it is beautiful, isn't it?

Mycroft is content to know he's in London, and since he's probably being caught on surveillance by a camera nearby anyway, he won't be bothered yet. The cigarette smoke is stale in his mouth while he stands outside Victor's flat, and he thinks about desecrated churches, trees being split in two. London breathes around him like a slumbering dragon, and Sherlock wonders why, of all the places to be, he is here.

He really does have a knack for loving the things that will tear him apart, in the end.

He knows Victor is fucking some vapid, blond omega. He knows she comes over on the weekends and she's in the same year as she is, physics major, and she is beautiful and smart and all the things that he is not, most importantly, normal. Victor likes him because he is jagged and sharp and sometimes you just want someone *interesting* to fuck, which Sherlock can understand, he really can, but he supposes that you can't fall in love with a maelstrom because it sucks you in and kills you. Fate always seems to have its way.

Sherlock feels sad, he feels the edges of it creeping into the hollow in his chest, threatening to make his heart ache. He doesn't want it, hates it, actually, and he never lets himself feel those things, but it's even more painful trying to choke them. He rings the bell.

Victor opens the door, and he looks much the same, only his chin is dark with stubble and his hair is slightly longer. His scent is different, though, he can smell the ripe, floral scent of the physics major on him, and it gives him a sharp twinge somewhere in the vicinity of his chest.

"Sherlock?" Victor looks confused before he breaks out in a grin. "Fuck, it's good to see you. Come in. What are you doing here?"

Sherlock doesn't say anything, just shakes the rain from his hair and steps into the warmer confines of Victor's flat. Vic closes the door behind him, and Sherlock looks around at the small room, messy and disoriented and covered in books everywhere.

"There are two more people living with you," Sherlock infers. "One of them is a theatre major, hmm, interesting, alpha. The other...physics? Ah, no, chemistry, along with you, those belong to the omega you're currently shagging. The theatre major plays tennis, the other one is a terrible guitar player, hmm...he doesn't—"

"Shh," Victor says behind him, hands resting on his hips and mouth against his ear. "Slow down for a bit, would you?"

Sherlock wants to tell him that he doesn't want to slow down, that the entire point of Victor was that he didn't mind when Sherlock didn't 'slow down'. He turns around and opens his mouth to tell him so, but Victor kisses him then, and he tastes like coffee and cigarette smoke; the familiarity of it makes everything inside of him ache, and his thoughts on the matter vanish entirely. He is aware of
his coat being slipped off his shoulders, the muted thump as the heavy wool falls on the wooden floor. Victor's warm fingers cup his chin and he angles his head so Victor can kiss him deeper. But he smells wrong, and Sherlock presses his palms against his chest and pushes him off.

"What was that for?" Victor asks, eyes narrowing.

"I didn't come here so you could fuck me," Sherlock answers, looking back at him unflinchingly.

"No?" Victor challenges, looking amused. "Funny."

Sherlock tries not to think about how that doesn't sound quite right. He sighs and sits down on the threadbare couch instead, picks up the half empty bottle of whiskey on the little coffee table and swigs. Victor laughs from the spot he hasn't moved from, and asks, "Do you want a glass?"

"Does it look like I want a glass," Sherlock asks him, and looks up at him, and quite deliberately, licks his upper lip, mopping up the linger taste of alcohol. Tattered converse are thumped down on the rough top of the table, as he stretches out his legs. A page of sheet music—piano, Victor used to play, still plays, maybe, he doesn't really care—flutters to the floor.

Victor sits down next to him, takes the bottle from his hand and puts it down on the table. "Why are you here, Sherlock," he asks. Sherlock stares at the faded bottoms of his pyjamas.

"Where are the rest of your flatmates?" he asks instead.

"Out, I suppose. I don't know," his fingers play on his thighs. Sherlock likes those fingers.

"You were with her," he mutters, staring at them. "Right before. At the pub down the street. Do you like her very much?"

"Yes, I do," Victor answers confidently, while he tangles fingers in Sherlock's hair to turn his head. "What is all this?"

"I—" Sherlock tries not to purr from the feel of Victor's hands. He remembers those fingers. How they feel on him. Inside him. Running down his skin. Victor touches her like that, he thinks, he's been doing it for almost a year, and he came by every vacation and still fucked Sherlock over his desk in his bedroom. Like clockwork. Like routine. "I don't know," he replies, surprisingly ineloquent, unsure of what to do with any part of his body. Victor seemed to like him in only one way, and it seems like even that is fading.

"You smell different," Victor says, pressing his mouth to side of Sherlock's neck. "Suppressants?" He inhales. "You used to smell better."

"And I couldn't make it to school without half the population of the town attempting to grope me," Sherlock rejoins, deadpan. "I found it immensely enjoyable."

"Smart arse," Victor breathes against his neck, and then in one fluid movement has him his back, on straddling his hips. "You're going to have a hard time at university if you keep opening this all the time," he brushes his fingers over Sherlock's lips. Sherlock ignores the comment and instead, in a stroke of genius opens his mouth and sucks Victor's fingers into them. Victor's eyes darken predictably and his mouth pulls up into a crooked smile.

"There, that," he groans. "That's what you should do with that pretty mouth of yours." He pushes them further into his mouth and Sherlock closes his eyes and swirls his tongue around them. Victor rolls his hips against him, making him gasp and buck his hips upward.
"Ah, that's it, feels good, doesn't it?" he leans down and kisses him. "Thought you didn't come here so I could fuck you," he mocks, dipping fingers into his waistband and pulling them down, jeans and pants together. Sherlock wants to correct him that no, he doesn't really want Victor to shag him here, he just wanted to see him, but he's afraid that that will not have a positive reaction and all he wants right now is for Victor to not leave. He'd let him fuck him a thousand times if that meant that Victor would just stay. "Almost eighteen and you still can't tell what you want," he says, wrapping a hand around his erection. Sherlock makes a strangled sort of noise, eyes going wide and teeth digging hard into his bottom lip as he tries to control the sounds he's making.

"Are you—are you going to fuck me, then?" he rasps, as Victor gives his cock a slow tug, using his other hand to unbutton his shirt.

"What's it look like I'm doing, genius," he responds, smirking, and brushes a thumb over a nipple. Sherlock's eyes roll back in his head and the familiar heat spirals down his body. Suppressants were originally wrecking havoc with his libido, he felt no arousal at all for the first few weeks but now it seems that Victor is working around that particular problem, if his pulsing prick is anything to go by.

"Ah, ah, fuck," he groans, and Victor leans down the side of the couch to rummage somewhere on the floor, fishing out a bottle of lube.

"You fucked her here," he observes. "On this couch, using that—"

"Mmm hmm," Victor responds, grabbing his hip and attempting to turn him over.

"What if someone were to come in, what if—"

"Then you better shut up and flip over, hmm?" he replies, fingers digging a bit more persistently into his flesh.

"And now you're fucking me," Sherlock can't help the hysterical bubble of laughter that's building in his throat, threatening to escape his mouth. "On this very couch, you should have used the bed, Vic, should have taken her on the bed, or fucked me on the floor, which is filthy by the way, but since when have you cared—"

"Shut up," Victor answers, and grabs him by the hipbones and forces him on his front. Sherlock is caught between the same hysterical laughter and arousal and bitter tears are pricking at the corner of his eyes—what? Where did they come from? Something is confusing about all of this, there is something odd in Victor's touches tonight, they have always been rough, but never quite bordering on violent—odd, but Sherlock doesn't move, because Victor won't want him if he can't fuck him, and Sherlock will be alone. The thought of being alone is enough to terrify him, send him into a panic. He bites his lips and his fingers dig into the arm of the sofa, before he suddenly screams as Victor's palms surround his hips and he pushes right in.

"Fuck," Sherlock hisses through the sudden onslaught of pain. Victor's hands hurt on his backside, he hasn't even prepared him, god it hurts.

"That's it, fuck, yeah," Victor groans behind him, thrusts erratic and rough and Sherlock is gasping and writhing underneath him in a few seconds, uncomfortable and itching to get out. Sex is horrible, he decides, what has he been thinking all this time? It used to be mildly pleasant, but this, fuck, this is threatening to cut off his oxygen and send him straight into an anxiety attack.

"Victor," he manages to choke out, as he fucks him, quick and shallow, but painful all the same. "Vic, please, I—" he can't quite get the sentence out, because it dissolves into a whimper instead. Victor grabs him by the hair and wrenches his head back, holding him almost upright and thrusts in...
at a different angle, and it feels—fuck, that would be his prostate—but it hurts, it hurts, and Sherlock doesn't want, he doesn't, but instead of 'no' all he manages to emit is a gasp and a groan.

"Like that, don't you, like being fucked over the sofa like a slut?" Victor has his arm around his middle, practically pulling him into his lap. Sherlock writhes around, pleading noises escaping his mouth which Victor probably mistakes for arousal. A few more thrusts and his orgasm is wrenched out of him, while he gasps and his fingers dig into the sofa. Victor fucks into his pliant, limp body until he spends himself inside of him, and then he pulls wetly out of him. Sherlock winches and mewls a bit pathetically and falls face first into the couch, feeling more like a washed out rag than anything else.

He breathes. In. Out. In. Out. He can hear rain falling outside. Pat pat pat against the window. In. Out. In. Out. Pat. Pat. Pat. His heart thuds against his chest, his entire body aches, and his lips are chapped and red. Pat. Pat. In. Out. He tries to move his arms and pull his pants up, but he finds that he can't move anything at the moment. Victor behind him, the whish of pyjamas as they're pulled up his legs. An old t-shirt thrown over the arm of the sofa.

"Mmm. That was great," he says. "Clean that up, would you." Or something. Sherlock can't be sure. There is a dull pounding in his ears.

Victor disappears for a moment and Sherlock is grateful for the few minutes to pull himself together and wipe his own semen off the couch. It will still be obvious to anyone with a pair of eyes and a decent sense of smell, he thinks, while he rubs it off and throws the offending garment on the floor. But Victor has never really cared about who knows.

When he comes back in a fresh set of pyjamas and hair roughly combed, Sherlock has his own pants and jeans on and his shirt is buttoned. If only he could change his clothes and wipe all evidence of being fucked by Victor off his body. But it still clings to him, like sweat, and he would be able to feel it even if he scrubbed himself raw.

"Drink that, if you want," Victor gestures towards the alcohol Sherlock wants to laugh. He almost does, but instead the manic laughter that threatens to spill, ugly and bitter, from his lips, emerges in a short, sharp chuckle.

"I bet she's stupid," he says, lighting a cigarette right in the middle of Victor's sitting room.

"Do you," Victor replies, uninterested. It makes Sherlock want to punch him.

"Yes. I—why her? Why are you—I don't understand, Vic, what about...what about..." The words jumble on the edge of his tongue and he ends up not saying at all, really. Victor stares at him from where he is standing in front of the window, looking quite confused.

"What about what?" he asks.

"Your requirements from a relationship are predominantly satisfaction of your sexual urges, yes?" Sherlock is suddenly standing up, words sharp and sharp and furious as he says them. "I gave that to you, didn't I? You wanted someone to conveniently fuck, and I let you. I fail to understand why you need an additional partner when you could have had me whenever you wanted. I demanded very little reciprocation from your part, many would say I am an ideal mate in that sense. Then why, Victor?" he threw his arms out, gesturing to everything, the flat, university, that bloody fucking omega that he's courting, all of these things around him that seem designed to torment him.

Victor stares. "What the hell are you talking about?" he demands, stepping closer. "What the hell is this," he says again, sounding marginally calmer. "Sherlock, explain."
"Since when have you ever needed me to talk," Sherlock screams, and picks up the bottle and hurls at the wall. It makes a screeching, terrible noise as it shatters on impact and there's alcohol and broken pieces of glass everywhere. It smells like a pub suddenly.

"What the fuck," Victor seethes, and then suddenly he's shoving Sherlock's coat into his chest and saying, "Get out. Get out of this flat. What the hell is wrong with you, call your brother, I don't care, just get out."

Sherlock is frozen by this sudden cruelty and is unable to say something until Victor is pushing him towards the door.

"You—"

"Honestly, Sherlock, you're right, you were a good shag, and don't take this the wrong way, but you're f*cked up."

Good shag. Good shag? Sherlock should say something. Hit him. Threaten to tell that vapid bitch that her boyfriend has been cheating on her for months but his mouth is unbearably frozen.

"Don't—I thought—" his fingers are shaking uncontrollably for some reason.

"You thought what," suddenly Victor stops, one arm stretched out beside him where his palm is against the door. His eyes are cold and his mouth an unyielding, hard line. "Thought I was in love with you, you loved with me, what? It was just sex, Sherlock, I had a good time, you had a good time, that's really all there was. Don't make it something you're not. And I thought you didn't give a shit about stuff like that. You don't, do you?"

He doesn't. Does he? Sherlock looks down at his coat in his arms, at Victor's disbelieving expression, feels his throat swell uncomfortably. Of course it was just sex. Sherlock knows that. And why on earth would he love Victor? He doesn't want to be loved. He just wanted a friend. That's what Victor was, right? A friend?

"No," he says, his voice shaking a little. "No of course not."

"Good. Glad we sorted that out." Then he pulls Sherlock away from the door, opens it, and then gestures outside with his arm. "I think you should leave. Ashley will be here any moment."

"It's raining," Sherlock says, and he could kick himself, because isn't that an obvious comment.

Victor looks unconcerned. "Get an umbrella," he answers, and then shuts the door in his face.

Sherlock stumbles for a few seconds on the steps outside before he manages to stop his body from trembling quite so much. The rain falls and it is already seeping into his hair, his collar, his feet. He stares at his coat and feels lost. He feels lost. What is he supposed to do now? The rain is in his eyes now and he has to blink repeatedly to get it out.

His throat feels odd. Swollen, as if...but he hasn't cried in years, and he's far too old now anyway.

The coat is already quite sodden in his arms but he slips it on all the same, grateful for the bit of warmth it provides. When he gets out into the street he is drenched in seconds, hair plastered to his forehead and rainwater seeping into his shoes. How idiotic of Victor to suggest he get an umbrella. Where will he find an umbrella? Lying on the road?

He shivers. The rain falls. He knows his way well enough around London, even though he's been in the city only a few times, but he stands still, letting himself get wet, for an unforgivably long period
of time because his brain seems to not be working. As if on cue, a sleek black car pulls up on the side of the road.

Sherlock rolls his eyes, but walks towards it all the same, tumbling into the warmth of car.

"You're a bloody annoying twat," he tells Mycroft, which he knows Mycroft will translate into *Thank you for coming I'm a bloody mess and I'm falling apart.*

Mycroft's fingers tap against the wheel, and he looks at Sherlock in the rear mirror, grey eyes piercing and all-knowing, reminding him of younger days, skinned knees, Mycroft's careful fingers bandaging injuries, reading him pirate stories. "Where shall we go, then?" he asks.

"Take me home," Sherlock says, in a quiet voice, and curls up as small as he can in the back seat, as if he can physically make himself disappear.

Chapter End Notes

This is the last John-less chapter that you will have to bear, I promise. Stay tuned.
And on that note, please leave a review. :) 
And, of course, if any of you would like to talk about this fic, have any questions regarding the f-ed up biology of the omegaverse, or just wanna chat, you can always visit me at [my tumblr](https://example.com).
As if on cue, the blond one rears an arm back and lands a punch on Sebastian’s jaw. “Fuck off,” he tells him calmly. “He’s sick. He needs a doctor.”

Chapter Notes

I am so sorry for being MIA for so long. I had a lot of work to finish, exams to take, and generally adult things to do. But I’m back now, with a new update! Also, this hasn’t been beta-ed, so any stupid mistakes are my own and if you point them out, I will correct them.

~Heed the tagzzzzz~

All of us stuck on the freeway
Are underneath downtown and the sky. If you spend
Long enough in one place you will eventually be hit
By lightening.

- *Neil Hilborn*

Part Two: explaining is an admission of failure

Sherlock’s eyes are tired from staring at the computer screen for so long. The letters are etched into the back of his eyes; if he closes them he can still see them clearly. Briefly, he considers picking up the entire computer and throwing it out the window. Imagines the mild satisfaction of seeing it broken and hissing on the pavement below.

Victor has sent him twenty one emails over the course of the last year. They’ve grown increasingly aggressive the last four months. They have recently stopped. The only conclusion that Sherlock can
come to is that he has realized that Sherlock isn’t worth the effort and has therefore given up. Victor, it turns out, is far cleverer than he had assumed. Still, there is a tightness in his chest that refuses to dissipate.

He stubs his cigarette onto his desk, watches the ash collect in a tiny pile on the wood.

***

He doesn’t quite remember whose flat he’s in when he gets caught; barely remembers short cropped black hair, freckles, dexterous, nimble fingers trying to undo the fly of his jeans.

Not his proudest moment, even worse when someone kicks the door open and then there are rough hands on his shoulder, slamming his face first against the wall; the clink of metal against his wrist. Sherlock remembers laughing, telling the officer that he’s sorry that his television isn’t working, and he has the number for a repair service if he’s interested. By the way, would it be too forward of him to ask if he’ll be fighting for joint custody of the children, or will he just—

The officer hisses at him to shut up, and he’s being bundled into a car, thrown into a cell. Too many things happening too fast, and they even took away the cocaine in his pocket. And he’d paid so much for it too.

He wakes up aching, twitching, and feeling distinctly warm. He undoes the top two buttons of his shirt. His head hurts. His eyes are itchy. The grey haired officer from yesterday is sitting at a desk a little further away, reading something from a file and drinking a gigantic mug of coffee. He doesn’t even look up from his file when he asks, “How’d you know my electricity wasn’t working?”

Sherlock leans back against the wall, knees drawn up, exhausted but grinning. He explains it to him, and the officer looks…impressed.

“And the divorce?”

Easily explained.

“It’s a pity that someone so bright is wasting the best years of his life,” the officer tells him. He’s young, mid thirties perhaps; but he looks much older than his age and his hair is streaked prematurely with grey. Sherlock finds him vaguely interesting. There isn’t much to find out about him, but whatever he can pick from his hair and his clothes and the paler skin around his ring finger, he tells him. The officer looks up then, cocks his head to the side and says, “Hmm.” There’s pity in his eyes, and disappointment, par for the course whenever people look at him, really, but also…surprise. Awe. Sherlock takes what he can.

“Drugs wreck havoc on your reproductive system,” he says after a while, and Sherlock decides he doesn’t like him very much after all. Still, when they bring in a suspect for questioning later and Sherlock tells him that they’ve got the wrong man, the officer walks up to his cell, wraps his fingers around an iron bar and asks, “Tell me what you think, then.”

Later, of course, (but still unforgivably long for Mycroft) there is a phone call, and the officer looks
surprised and a little annoyed while he’s on the phone, but he says, “Yes. Yes, sir,” and keeps it
down with much more force than warranted. Sherlock wonders if he’s permanently damaged the
phone.

“Orders from the higher ups that you’re to be released,” he tells Sherlock. His eyes are narrowed.
“Should have known. Posh, spoilt brat with too much time and too much money on his hands.
You’re actually quite clever, you might as well do something with that gigantic brain of yours.”

He sends someone to unlock him, and they give him back his wallet and keys. Sherlock is shrugging
into his coat when he takes the ID card he nicked from the officer’s desk and hands it back to him,
hanging precariously between two fingers. “I’m not spoilt,” he pauses. “Mr. Lestrade.”

He raises his eyebrows and takes the ID card back, slips it into his pocket. “Greg,” he corrects him.
The hardness around his eyes softens a bit. “And that,” he taps his pocket, “was a criminal offence.”

Sherlock gives him an appraising look. The tie around his neck is loose. He can see a faded bond
mark peeking out from underneath the dark blue material. Close enough to smell him now, faintly;
alpha. He shrugs. “I thought you were a police officer. You should be more alert.”

“Detective inspector actually,” he points his chin towards the door. “Some Mycroft Holmes is
waiting for you in a car outside. Father? Never mind, I don’t want to know. You should be off. Well,
technically you should be staying here serving your time, but I suppose having connections to the
government has its perks.”

Sherlock reaches forward for his mug and drains the remaining coffee, just to annoy him. “You’ve
still caught the wrong man.”

His lips curve up, not quite a smile. “Have you considered joining the force?”

Sherlock snorts. “Please.”

“If you get yourself cleaned up, I might have a case or two for you. You’re bored out of your mind,
aren’t you?” His fingers drum against his desk.

Sherlock purses his lips, but doesn’t say anything.

***

“I see you’ve got your giant nose everywhere,” Sherlock snaps when he climbs into the car. “Don’t
you have a bureaucratic ladder to climb?”

“A thank you would be lovely,” Mycroft rejoins smoothly, throwing him a six pack of bottled water.
He sounds slightly amused, but Sherlock isn’t fooled for a second. There’s barely contained fury in
his voice.

He tears at the packaging, rips one bottle from the rest and cracks the seal open. It’s cold and it tastes
wonderful. “I could have escaped.”

Mycroft laughs. “No you couldn’t have.”
A wave of nausea hits him and he doubles over, gripping the bottle so hard in his hand that he can hear the loud crinkling of plastic. He squeezes his head between his knees. Blood pounds in his ears. He feels the delicate trickle of sweat down the back of his neck.

“This has to stop,” Mycroft tells him when he finally falls back against the seat, sweating and panting. “Or I’m sending you to rehab next week. There’s a lovely, quiet one in Scotland, you might even like it there.”

“No.” Sherlock looks at him in the mirror, is disgusted with the own panic in his voice. Rehab; four walls closing in on him and no respite, stupid, foolish dull people plying him with pills that do nothing for him, only make him want to wrench his own skin apart—

Mycroft turns a corner. “Don’t push me,” he says mildly.

Sherlock grits his teeth. “I have it under control.”

“You’re one miscalculation away from an overdose,” Mycroft corrects him. “I wouldn’t call that having it under control.”

They’re both quiet for a while, Sherlock quietly seething in the backseat, feeling ill. He’s drunk the whole bottle in one go and now it sloshes around uncomfortably in his stomach.

“Where are we going?” he asks after a while. His voice is reminiscent of metal grinding against metal; loud and scratchy.

“The toxic dump you inhabit currently.” Mycroft reaches under his seat and lifts a plastic bag and throws it in the backseat. An apple rolls out. “Eat something healthy. Get some rest. Take a bloody bath, you look awful.”

Sherlock counts the fruits in the bag. “I did spend the night in a prison,” he replies, examining an orange. He pokes around a bit more, it gives his brain something else to concentrate on other than the prickling sensation that’s accosting his body. Hmm. Mushrooms. Onions. Tomatoes. Green tea. Interesting.

“Sherlock.”

“Yes, Mycroft, I’ll take a bath.”

“That’s not what I was going to say.”

“I know what you were going to say, and I don’t care.”

Mycroft doesn’t reply, stares straight ahead with his mouth pressed into a thin line. Sherlock’s fingers curl into his jeans; it feels like his head is going to split apart.

“I’m not dragging you back from prison a second time,” Mycroft says after a while. “This self destructive behavior must stop, Sherlock. I am serious about rehab. You need help. I’m running out of options.”

“Drop me off here, I’ll walk the rest of the way.”

“You’re missing classes.”
“I’m aware. I’m the one missing them, you see.”

“Cocaine and suppressants are not a good mix. It will cause permanent damage, you know the side effects—”

“I won’t be able to pop out a young ‘un in a few years, what a crying shame,” Sherlock mocks venomously. “Stop the bloody car.”

The car grinds to a smooth halt. “I’ll stop the suppressants.”

“I feel like we’ve had this conversation before.” Sherlock unlocks the door. “Good day, brother. I’ll see you…hmm, next year, perhaps.”

“You should come visit,” Mycroft says quietly before he’s about to shut the door. “Christmas, if you like. Mummy hasn’t seen you in months.”


He climbs up the steps, walk inside, locks his door.

Mycroft doesn’t drive away until Sherlock is inside his flat.

***

Of course, he has the groceries sent in the evening. Someone’s added Jaffa cakes to the mix. Sherlock hates Mycroft with a vengeance.

***

The majority of officers in the precinct are dull and foolish. Lestrade is barely competent, but he’s the best of a bad lot, Sherlock supposes. He tells him so when he catches him breaking into a building next week. Lestrade wants to arrest him, but Sherlock laughs and tells him that perhaps they should arrest the person who committed the murder first.

“If the brother has a green ladder,” Sherlock informs him. “You should arrest him.” Lestrade’s expression is caught somewhere between fury and barely contained disappointment. The corpse on the other side of the room is vastly interesting. If only Sherlock could have a good look at him, he’d probably be able to pinpoint the killer’s location too.

The other officers in the flat are whispering among themselves. A few of them point at him. Lestrade grabs him by the elbow and steers him out of the sitting room, taking him to the kitchen instead. Dirty dishes are piled up high in the sink. Someone’s been avoiding the washing. Interesting.

“If I see you again, like this,” Lestrade pokes him hard in the chest to get his attention. “I’m arresting you again. I don’t care if your brother bails you out. I’ll put you back inside.”

Sherlock is barely listening.

“Listen to me. Sherlock. Sherlock. That’s your name right?” He taps two fingers against his jaw to turn his head. Sherlock looks at him. They’re almost the same height. He’s always been tall for an
omega. “Yeah. So. I need your help. And helping me, it’s good for you. Gives your brain something to do, yeah? But you can’t help me like this. You’re an omega, and you’re an addict. No one will take you seriously. Do you hear me? Clean yourself up. You’re going to die by thirty at this rate.”

Sherlock blinks. He never expected to live long in any case. He wants to tell Lestrade this, that flames that burn brightly go out very quickly, and that he doesn’t care, either way. Instead he grips the officer hard by the shoulder, and grins, all teeth. “Well then, I’ve got around ten years, then, haven’t I, officer?”

***

Sherlock meets John Watson a month later.

He wishes he was in a better state of mind when he saw him first, it would have been nice to remember every detail of what he looked like when he did. As it is, morphine makes him slow and it wasn’t a clean mix anyway.

***

-

Perhaps he should feel guilty about it, about teasing Sebastian. Dangling what he wants in front of his eyes and taking it away. But it gets him what he wants. That’s all that matters, isn’t it?

***

"Just let me kiss you once,” he says, breath warm against Sherlock’s mouth. "Just once, it'll be so good, I promise."

"Maybe,” Sherlock taps his index finger against Sebastian's lips. "If you give me something.”

***

Alcohol is mostly tedious; so Sherlock stays clear of it. It makes him slow and stupid and he can’t keep much of it down, anyway. But Sebastian. Sebastian is definitely drunk. He can feel the reek of it coming from his mouth, the haze in his eyes.

“You’re very pretty,” he slurs, taking Sherlock’s wrist and pulling it to his mouth. “Why’d you-you’d smell so much better if you’d just stop taking those suppressants. You’re just so pretty, Sherlock.” He flicks his tongue against his pulse.

“Hmm,” Sherlock replies, bored. “Is your door locked?”

They’re in his bedroom, at one of Sebastian’s ‘parties’ or whatever he chooses to call them. Sebastian is probably the worst kind of Alpha; rich, entitled, spoilt. In a few years his family will find him a suitable omega from a likewise rich, entitled, spoilt family and he’ll spawn a brood of his own. Happy endings for everyone.

“No one will come in,” Sebastian promises him, voice dropping conspiratorially. “I’ll kill them if they do.”

“Really.” Sherlock presses two fingers against his neck. His pulse jumps. Sebastian’s erect cock, nestled against his thigh, twitches as well. He pushes him harder against the wall, cupping his hands
around Sherlock’s hips. God, it’s frightfully easy to rile them up.

“Fuck. Yeah. I won’t let anyone touch you,” he noses along the edge of Sherlock’s jaw.

“Very flattering, Seb, really. But you know what I want, so why don’t you give it to me?”

“What about—what about what I want, Sherlock? Hmm?” His hips move restlessly against Sherlock, hardness brushing against the crease between his crotch and his thigh. “You should— you should give me something too.”

Sherlock rolls his eyes. “Seb, honestly, this is getting tedious. Coke first, grope me later.” He pushes him off. Seb grins crookedly at him, but it doesn’t quite reach his eyes. Sherlock crosses his arms and raises an eyebrow at him, expectantly. Oafs, the lot of them. Clueless, lumbering oafs.

Seb huffs a laugh and straightens the collar of his shirt. “Fine,” he smiles, lifting up his hands in mock surrender. “Fine. Of course.”

Sherlock makes a well, get on with it, gesture with his hand. He feels a little unease prickle at his skin, at the way Sebastian looks at him. Still. Sebastian is drunk, and he is not. He can get out of here should the situation call for it. As it is he watches carefully as Sebastian walks over to his bed and takes his jacket, fishing in the pocket until he brings out a slim, black box.

“I remember our deal, Sherlock,” Sebastian says, taking out the vial and syringe. His movements are precise, careful. “Sometimes it’s frustrating, but really, what can I do?”

Sherlock doesn’t notice anything wrong until—

“Wait,” he barks, but Sebastian is already quite close to him, tapping the syringe twice. “Wait let me look—”

“Oh, you don’t need to look, love, it’s fine, see—” he takes his wrist, plunges it in. Sherlock hisses a bit.

“No, it’s not the right— not the right colour, he wants to say. Slightly discoloured. Pinkish. But Sebastian is already pressing down on the syringe, and whatever is in it is already traveling through his body. It’s cocaine, he knows, at least partly—

“You shouldn’t worry so much,” Sebastian tells him, as if he can somehow understand the horror that is slowly creeping through Sherlock’s body along with some unknown, potentially dangerous substance. He rubs the point where the needle’s pressed in. “Relax.”

Sherlock snatches his arm away from him. Or tries to. He’s beginning to realize that his movements should be quicker, more precise. Instead Sebastian’s fingers are still around his wrist, and he is smirking at him.

“Takes effect quickly,” he says calmly, sliding his hand up Sherlock’s arm, raising gooseflesh. “Doesn’t stay for very long, but then. I won’t need very long.”

“Get-get off,” Sherlock manages to say, and tugs ineffectually. Sebastian cocks his head, smirk still in place. Then he shoves Sherlock, hard, against the wall. The back of his head bangs painfully against it. Sherlock screws his eyes shut. He needs to think. He needs to think- but- but-

he can’t.

Instead he somehow loses his balance and his legs give away underneath him. He slides halfway
down the wall before Sebastian grabs him underneath his arse and somehow props him against the wall like a doll.

“It may have some side effects,” he says absently, slipping his hands underneath Sherlock’s shirt, fingers traveling over his ribcage. “Don’t worry though, I’ll take care of you.”

“You—” why is this so difficult? Sherlock feels his heart ram repeatedly against his chest, it hurts, but still normal enough for cocaine- except there is a dull ache somewhere in the vicinity of his abdomen, and suddenly-suddenly- he realizes that Sebastian will be able to make that pain go away. “You-what have you done?” he croaks. He curls his fingers into Sebastian’s collar. Pulls him closer. Buries his nose against his neck. “I want-I want-“

No I don’t. He hisses, as if he’s been burnt, and pulls away- tries to disentangle himself from Sebastian, but it feels as though he’s walking through molasses.

“Shhh,” Sebastian says, his hands gripping his ribs tighter. Sherlock’s shirt is hitched up to his chest, his skin is hot, and Sebastian’s fingers are cool against it. He wants more of it. He wants it all over his body, in fact. He wants to strip naked and- what the hell? Sherlock isn’t in heat. He hasn’t gone into heat for over a year. Then why-

Sebastian fists his hand in Sherlock’s hair and wrenches his head to the side, mouthing at his neck. He gasps, hips suddenly thrusting up and forward, seeking out friction, wetness gathering in the cleft of his arse, sticky and warm.

“That’s it-“ Sebastian says, inching his hand downward and dipping his fingers into the waistband of Sherlock’s jeans. Sherlock shivers. “You’re such- such a tease- it would never be enough, let me, just let me—“

This feels wrong. He feels sick. He doesn’t want this at all, in fact, he wants Sebastian as far away from his as possible, oh god, what is wrong with his body-

“Excuse me, can I just-“

Sebastian pushes off of him with a grunt, the cloying weight of his body gone. But without Sebastian’s arms around him Sherlock slides to the floor in a heap. His stomach cramps- his hand flies to his abdomen.

“Sorry-“

“Sorry mate, we could use a little bit of privacy-“

“Yeah, sure, I’m just looking for my friend- wait, what’s wrong with him?”

“Nothing, he’s fine. If you don’t mind, mate-“

“He looks sick. What’s he taken?”

Sherlock wants to stand up, wants to tell whoever it is to fuck off and leave him alone and to help him because he feels ready to puke out the contents of his stomach right here. “I’m—I’m not—“ he rasps, unable to finish his sentence.

The door is open, and someone is standing at the door. Short, blond, blue eyes, average build, more on the stocky side- that’s all Sherlock can manage to deduce before he doubles up, on all fours, and starts to retch. Immediately someone is kneeling in front of him, hands on his shoulders- firm but not rough, trying to get him to sit up.
“Hey-hey, take it easy, do you need to go to a bathroom? Do you have some water, we need to get him some water- what the fuck have you given him?”

“Alright, you know what, he’s fine. Why don’t you get out mate, and leave us alone?” Sebastian snarls at the boy(man?) and pulls him away.

“Fine? He’s not fine, he needs a bloody hospital-“

The cramps subside. Sherlock takes a deep breath. The both of them are still fighting. Useless, idiot alphas. He raises a shaking hand and wipes the sweat off his brow. The pain in his abdomen is back again- and with it the horrible need- and Sherlock notices there are two Alphas in the room and suddenly all he wants to do is spread his legs and beg.

Crawl over to them, on all fours, flip over-

This is not happening.

The sudden wave of arousal is so strong Sherlock chokes, twisting his legs together. He hasn’t felt anything remotely close to this in over a year- the suppressants dampen his libido considerably- but now, now, shit-

He’s been through this. He hates it, he hates it, he won’t let this happen again.

“I need-“ he starts to say, and the both of them turn towards him. But there are no tell tale signs that he is going into heat- no flaring nostrils, no low, possessive growls. The blonde one has concern in his eyes.

He makes as if to go towards Sherlock but Sebastian wrenches him back again by his elbow with a snarl. As if on cue, the blond one rears an arm back and lands a punch on Sebastian’s jaw. “Fuck off,” he tells him calmly. “He’s sick. He needs a doctor.”

Unfortunately Sebastian cannot reply because he’s out cold.

Good.


“What-are you, are you-“ he sounds panicked.

“No,” Sherlock gasps, reaching forward and grabbing him by the back of his neck and pushing him forward. He smells much better than Sebastian. He should tell him that. He’d like that. Sherlock pulls in deep breaths of him, he smells lovely- a bit like scotch, a bit like butter- Sherlock wants to roll around in it. Sherlock wants.

He remembers feeling like this, but more, much more. It should have been red-hot, blinding, clawing desire; now Sherlock thinks he could step back, clamp his legs shut, but he doesn’t want to, it’s so confusing. He noses his neck, the tendons that stand out, straining.

The boy is still, so still that Sherlock can feel his Adam’s apple bob skittishly in his throat.

“Okay,” he says quietly, his voice a bit ragged. Something inside Sherlock quivers to hear that tone in his voice. “Okay. It’s just the drugs, alright. I need to take you somewhere safe. Do you know
anyone here, someone who you trust- who can take you home?

Everything below his waist aches. “No,” he says honestly, and presses his lips to the place on the boy’s neck where he can feel his pulse jump. He wants to lick his skin. “I don’t- I don’t know what he’s given me. I-“

“Something that’s messing with your hormones,” the boy informs him slowly in his ear. “Okay, listen. My name’s John. John Watson. And I’m going to help you get up now, so you hold on. Alright? Just hold on and we’ll stand up together. It’s fine. You’re fine. I’m going to get you out of here. Christ, this idiot can’t even hold himself in a fight.”

“You knocked him out,” Sherlock tells him, because he feels like it’s important. John should teach him how to do that. John. What a lovely name. “John’s a lovely name,” he says, because he feels like he should. John should know that he has a lovely name.

“Really? Thanks. Always thought it was rather plain,” John answers, sounding amused. He throws Sherlock’s arm over his shoulder and lifts him up. Sherlock stumbles, grabs hold of the front of John’s jumper.

“Sorry,” he mumbles. “I-can’t walk. Pro-prop-properly.” John wraps one arm around his waist and hitches him to his side.

“That’s fine. I’ve got you. Alright, is there anything you need to take from here? Wallet? A coat?”

Sherlock looks down at himself. His shirt is half unbuttoned- Sebastian’s work, probably. And his wallet- he’s not sure where it is. “Can you-can you check. My. My-“ he searches for a word. “pocket.”

“Erm. Yeah. Yeah, alright,” John says, and the arm at his waist dips a bit lower and pats gingerly at the pocket at his arse. “I think you’ve got your wallet,” he says. His voice sounds a bit strained. “Right, okay. I think it’s time for us to get out of this room. I don’t want that cock to wake up and start screaming again.”

“Medical student.”

“Sorry, what?”

“You. Med student. Barts. Internship. Hmm. You’re not looking for your friend, you’re looking for your sister,” Sherlock puts one foot in front of the other. He wonders briefly if this is a bad idea, he doesn’t know who John is, not really, and he could be taking him somewhere that isn’t safe at all.

“What? How the hell did you know that?” John finally brings them out of the room. Music floods down the hall, he can hear the bass, thumping uncomfortably in his ear. His head aches along with the beat.

“I’m smart,” Sherlock tells him, because he is, and because he’s too tired to think of anything smarter to say.

John laughs, a brief huff of laughter. Sherlock is a few inches taller than him. Maybe he could lean over and rest his head on John’s, smell him some more. He smells so good. John should pull him closer, scent him where he wants it. Sherlock wants him very badly. His entire body hurts, but he can’t smell anything on himself, no pheromones, no arousal. The entire sensation feels wrong. John could make him feel better.

“Well, that’s quite…amazing,” he says, and leads him down the hall. Sherlock stumbles again but
John grips him tighter along his waist.

“People-don’t…people don’t say that.”

“Really? What do they say then?”

“Piss off.” He pauses. “Someone punched me once.”

“Well, that doesn’t sound very fair. You were probably right anyway.”

“I was,” Sherlock agrees. “You’re smart too, John.”

“Yeah,” John laughs again. “Okay. I need to find my sister. She shouldn’t be here, not at this horrible place.”

Sherlock agrees with John. This is a terrible place. There are idiots everywhere.

“I think she’s in that room. Clara’ll be here in a mo, she can pick Harry up. But I just need to-” John leads him across the sitting room, weaving their way through people until he deposits Sherlock on a sofa. There’s someone else on the sofa. Sherlock wants to tell John that he wants to get out of here now- somewhere cool and dark where he can rid of all these clothes.

He bends down to whisper in his ear, hands on his knees. “Just stay here, alright? I’ll be back in a minute. If someone touches you, you shout for me. Okay?” Sherlock notices his hair now- it’s floppy and blonde, stops just at the tops of his ears, but falls messily into his eyes. He wants to turn his head and take the shell of his ear into his mouth. Taste him.

His eyes are very blue. Not particularly gorgeous, but handsome in a pleasant, comforting way.

“Okay,” Sherlock promises.

John leaves, and Sherlock panics for a moment. He want to vomit again. He swallows the feeling down, cups a hand around his pelvis where the heat is gathering. The seat of his jeans feels a bit damp.

“Well, hello there,” the person next to him says. She has bright red hair, short and spiky. “I’m Megan.” She has her legs up on the sofa, a bottle in her hand.

“Go away,” Sherlock mutters, and curls in on himself.

“Rude,” she says.

Before Sherlock can show her exactly how rude he can be, he sees John again. He looks concerned, speaking on the phone. He has to push someone out of his way to get to the sofa. “Yeah, alright. Bye. Ta, Clara.”

He pockets his phone and holds out a hand for Sherlock. “Come on. Let’s get you home.”

“Your sister?” Sherlock asks. He takes John’s hand. His skin is warm.

“Her girlfriend took her home an hour ago. Could have told me, but good thing I came, yeah?” He wraps an arm around Sherlock’s waist again.

“Oh, so you’re taken. Could have told me that, love,” the woman on the sofa says.

“We’re not—” John starts to say, but he seems to give up.
Outside, it is cold. Freezing, actually. Sherlock shivers. John did up his buttons outside in the hall and then threw his own jacket over Sherlock’s shoulders. Sherlock’s gut tightened at the sudden scent of it; the smell of him is strong and bright in his nose, it smells lovely, Sherlock never wants to take this jacket off.

By the time John takes him outside, his head is spinning again. The road seems to tilt to one side like a seesaw. Sherlock can’t figure out why everyone is still standing, they should all be rolling over to the other side, loosing their balance and falling.

John still holds on tight on his arm, looking for a cab. Sherlock could call one easily, but he can’t seem to talk. His tongue feels swollen. He holds out an arm to grip John’s shoulder, hard. “John, I —” he swallows. Spinning. Spinning. Black spots dance in front of his eyes. “I think I am going to pass out.”

“What—” John turns around just as Sherlock pitches forward.

***
Saudade

Chapter Summary

Sherlock’s fingers are shaking.

He can’t tell why, even though he’s a genius. Possible answers flit through his mind; anxiety, stress, fear, lack of sleep, withdrawal, early signs of Parkinson’s Disease.

If ever any beauty I did see,

Which I desired, and got, ’twas but a dream of thee.

- John Donne, The Good Morrow

To be honest, John hadn’t completely dismissed the idea of the bloke passing out. But he had been hoping that if he did, it wouldn’t be on the middle of the street at one am.

He falls forward and John manages a surprised ‘oomph!’ before he catches him around the waist and somehow succeeds in preventing the both of them from falling to a heap together.

“Shit,” he curses, the only expletive he is capable of at the moment, too caught up with the idea of how terrible this looks to any casual observer. Perhaps he should put a sign on his head that says he isn’t a potential rapist.

The boy is heavy in his arms, and John has to use all of his strength to keep him upright. His skin is warm and feverish, and John feels another stab of anger at that stupid fucking arsehole who drugged him. He should have done much more than knocked him out.

The right thing to do would be to call his parents, John thinks. But if he’s a college student the chances are that they won’t be living in the same city. So…he’ll have to take him some place safe himself.

Should he carry him? He’s heavy- but his weight isn’t unbearable. But if he carries him he won’t be able to call a cab. So John holds him tighter, and stands on the edge of the street and raises his arm hoping the cabbie won’t be too suspicious of him.

A cab stops by him in a minute or two, and John has to promise to pay him an extra ten pounds so that he agrees to take them.

“Not askin’, mate,” the cabbie replies, and waits impatiently for John to manhandle the unconscious omega into the cab and prop him up so he’s leaning against John’s side. “Where to?”

“Um. Wait a sec,” John would rather not take him to his own flat where he lives with two other blokes and although he’s sure they wouldn’t touch the boy he thinks it still wouldn’t be safe for him. So he has to slip his hand underneath his arse and pull out the boy’s wallet. There’s some cash in it, a Scotland Yard ID card belonging to someone named Gregory Lestrade, and finally…a driver’s license.

_Name: Sherlock Holmes_

_Sex(A): Male Sex(B) Omega_

According to his date of birth, he’s almost twenty. “Baker Street,” John informs him, looking at the address mentioned. He finds a pair of keys stuffed into his pocket when he’s putting his wallet back inside so at least they won’t be stranded inside his building.

The cabbie drives and John checks the boy—Sherlock’s—pulse. It’s unusually fast, that would probably be the cocaine, and his skin is still hot. John knows objectively that he’s an omega, but he can’t smell anything on him, so presumably he’s on suppressants; he wouldn’t have been able to tell if Sherlock hadn’t buried his nose in John’s skin or presented his neck back in the flat. He shivers at the memory, feeling a protective surge of tenderness rise in him.

Damn it. He doesn’t even know him- he’ll drop him back in his flat, tell his neighbors, and then leave. He isn’t his responsibility and he’s done enough.

He pushes some of his thick hair back from his forehead, feeling guilty and a little sick with himself. Christ, he’s really quite pretty. The shifting shadows throw his cheekbones into stark relief; dark eyelashes fanned against his pale skin.

John spots the cabbie staring at Sherlock through the rear mirror and has a three second fantasy about taking his head and smashing it against the driving wheel. His arm around Sherlock tightens, and he smiles at the cabbie while doing so.

_Don’t even think about it, mate_, the smile says.

The cabbie shifts his gaze.

***

According to his address, Sherlock lives on the second floor. This is going to be slightly difficult, John thinks, standing in the foyer trying vainly to prevent Sherlock from sliding off of him and hitting the floor.

“Well,” he mutters to himself, “No two ways about it,” and he hooks an arm around Sherlock’s knees and his back, and picks him up in his arms. He staggers for a few seconds- Christ, he’s heavy-but manages to climb the first few steps. Sherlock barely stirs, just hangs limply from John’s arms, looking vulnerable and helpless, his head lolling backward. The skin of his neck is so pale it’s almost translucent.

John feel sick thinking about what would have happened to him if he hadn’t decided to step in.

He swallows, pushing his thoughts down. He finally reaches the flat named 221B, and it’s a struggle opening the door with an armful of unconscious omega, but he manages. As soon as they’re both inside, John drops him on to the nearest sofa. Then he drops to the floor himself, leaning against the
couch, cross legged and catching his breath.

He’s knocked the coffee table over on his way.

He’s inside what is vaguely serving as a sitting room; well, at least it has a sofa and an arm chair and a fire place, which is currently cold and empty. There are books everywhere; piled high in corners, stuffed into bulging bookshelves, teetering precariously on top of a desk on the other side of the room, a few litter the floor. There’s a bison head mounted on the wall wearing headphones, a skull on the mantel piece. He turns his head and sees the kitchen, except there’s a sleek microscope on the dining table instead of food, along with chemistry equipment that John’s only seen at the lab back at Bart’s.

He tries to figure out something about Sherlock from the detritus around him, but he draws a blank. All he can think about is Sherlock saying *I’m smart*, and he agrees with him.

John should leave. It’s only decent. He’s brought him to his flat and he’s some place safe. He checks his pulse- back to normal, as well as his temperature. The drugs seemed to have messed with his hormones but the effects are clearly waning; he’ll just have to sleep it off. There isn’t much else for John to do.

He’ll just shift Sherlock to his bedroom—except going inside his bedroom seems like an invasion of his privacy. But Sherlock would be uncomfortable on that sofa, wouldn’t he?

He turns around and looks at Sherlock, his head lolling to the side and the steady rise and fall of his chest. He’s still wearing John’s jacket. It doesn’t fit him properly, the sleeves don’t cover his writs. His skin peeks out from under the material, pale and oddly delicate.

John can’t help imagining Sherlock, comatose and limp, shoved up against some dirty wall with a stranger’s mouth on his neck, pushing his legs apart with a rough hand.

***

He finds what is presumably Sherlock’s bedroom down a short hall, and he has to push the door open with his shoulder, placing Sherlock carefully on the bed. The room looks barely lived in; the bed is made, neat and clean, and there isn’t much in the way of furniture. A desk, a closet, a bed. A framed picture of the periodic table mounted on wall. John’s beginning to think Sherlock’s a chemistry student, and probably a really excellent one.

He’s forgotten to take Sherlock’s jacket off; and he feels distinctly like a pervert thinking about it. He has to support Sherlock’s back on his arm while he drags it off his frame. It smells a little different now, a scent that has nothing to do with pheromones. John shrugs into it, and stands there, telling himself over and over that he’s being a creep now and he has to leave; but he still decides to at least take Sherlock’s trainers off and then he throws a blanket over his body.

He heads to the kitchen and after moving through the bio hazardous mess of petri dishes and jars of god knows what, he finds a glass, rinses it out for good measure, and brings a full glass back to Sherlock’s room. He might get thirsty.

Sherlock sleeps on, oblivious, and John leaves the room, but keeps the bedroom door open.

He’s halfway across the sitting room when he stops.

*But what if he needs me?* What if Sherlock wakes up and wonders who the hell put a blanket on him and took off his shoes- what if-what if he gets sick?
These are dangerous thoughts, John thinks.

I should leave, he tells himself.

***

He ends up sleeping on the sofa curled up under his jacket.

***

John sleeps for maybe four, five hours before he wakes up spluttering and coughing, his face cold and wet.

“What the fuck—” he chokes out, wiping his face.

“We clearly did not have intercourse last night. So kindly explain to me what you’re doing on my sofa.”

John blinks the water out of his eyes and sees Sherlock looking down at him, holding a (now empty) glass of water.

John stares at him for a few more seconds, unable to reconcile the limp, helpless boy he had to carry through the door yesterday with the one looking at him coldly right now.

“I- I can explain,” he says quickly, holding up his arms, palms facing Sherlock. “Give me a second.”

“Very well,” Sherlock replies, putting down his glass on the coffee table. He crosses his arms over his chest. His…bare chest. John notices only now that he’s not wearing a shirt, just a dressing gown pulled over his shoulders and the pair of jeans he was in last night, hanging off boyishly narrow hips. His hair is uncombed and messy, curling at his nape. Sherlock clears his throat and John has to flick his gaze away hurriedly, sitting up and rubbing his neck. It’s stiff.

“Do you always wake people up like that?” John grouses.

Sherlock raises an eyebrow. “Only strange men who fall asleep on my sofa.”

“Right. So you don’t remember last night.”

“Evidently not,” Sherlock sits down on the edge of the coffee table, hands at his sides, one leg bent at the knee and foot resting on the sofa. “Enlighten me.”

“Nothing?” John runs a hand through his hair. It’s probably looks like a mess. He probably looks like a mess. Sherlock, however, despite having woken up from a drunken stupor, looks…perfect. Disheveled and unkept, but still somehow attractive.

“I’m not sure,” Sherlock replies slowly, studying his face carefully. “That’s why I’m asking you.”

John licks his lips. “I- I uh- ran into you. Last night. At that bloke’s flat. I was looking for my sister. And then I saw you. Some bloke- I’m not sure who he is, really. Dark hair, pale, awful teeth, awful personality too. He, well. He was making a pass at you—” he swallows. “and it didn’t look like you particularly wanted it. So I knocked him out and decided to take you home, except you passed out on the way so…” so I carried you up the stairs and put you in your bed and looking at you like that made me fantasize a bit.

“Sebastian is always making a pass at me,” Sherlock tells him, eyes narrowed.
“Yeah, well, you were high as fuck last night and he’d mixed something into your solution so you couldn’t get your hands off him,” John explains. Or me, he thinks, remembering Sherlock’s cold nose pressed to his skin, his mouth. To his horror his cock twitches in his jeans. Shit.

Sherlock abruptly sits back, features turning blank, as if a shutter has been closed over his face. “That’s impossible,” he says blandly. “I would have noticed.”

John has a sudden urge to comfort him- to put an arm around his narrow shoulders and tell him that’s it’s alright, everyone makes mistakes, Sebastian is a bastard- and while he wouldn’t have hesitated to do it to him yesterday, Sherlock looks very different now. The softened edges are gone, as is the dazed look in his eyes. Now they’re clear and bright, glinting suspiciously, and although he looks tired, John can easily imagine Sherlock breaking his fingers if he touched him where it wasn’t wanted.

“You were high, so…” he gives a half hearted shrug.

Sherlock blinks a few times, shakes his head. “Did—“ his fingers twitch a bit. “Did he-did we…”

“No,” John says firmly. “No, it didn’t come to that.”

Sherlock nods, as if he were expecting it. He stands up, dressing gown falling to his shins. John is suddenly aware of how close he’s standing to him. The coffee table doesn’t offer much in the way of space and John is level with Sherlock’s navel. His skin is pale and smooth, flawless in a way that makes John wonder what it would feel like against his finger tips. He clears his throat, looks away.

He suddenly hears the click of a lighter and he looks up, watches Sherlock light a cigarette and put the lighter back in his dressing gown pocket. He takes a few drags before he looks down at John and says, “I should probably thank you, then.”

He doesn’t look particularly happy about it.

“It’s…it’s fine.”

“And apologise for waking you up in such an impolite fashion,” he continues, but by now he’s snaked his way out of the narrow space and is heading towards the kitchen. John watches as he brings down two mugs from a shelf, cigarette hanging precariously from his lips.

“If you don’t mind, I’m making tea.”

***

Sherlock’s fingers are shaking.

He can’t tell why, even though he’s a genius. Possible answers flit through his mind; anxiety, stress, fear, lack of sleep, withdrawal, early signs of Parkinson’s Disease.

He brings the mugs down and feels foolish and slightly ridiculous. He should be kicking this man out of his flat. His mouth feels bitter and awful. It isn’t true that he doesn’t remember last night. He remembers parts. And what he remembers make his cheeks flush with heat and his gut tighten uncomfortably. And what he doesn’t, he can deduce; John must have carried him upstairs in his arms, must have laid him on his bed. Taken off his shoes, pulled a blanket over him. He doesn’t know how he feels about it. Should he feel angry? Violated?

Maybe he shouldn’t have thrown water at him. That was rather rude, wasn’t it?
“Do you mind if I...er...use your loo?” John asks from his living room. He even remembers his name, which he hasn’t even mentioned yet. Sherlock feels sick.

“No,” he replies curtly. “Not a problem.” He hears John get up from the springy sofa, make his way down the hall and dull thud as the door clicks shut.

He lets out a sharp breath that sounds more like a sob, grips the edge of the sink hard. He can still remember what John smelled like.

Warm and buttery and so much more different than any other Alpha, maybe that’s why he’s having such an intense reaction to it.

*Pressing his nose against John’s neck- pheromones-his scent, the way he-*

Sherlock swallows.

Ridiculous. Stupid, foolish, idiotic. He’s just some boy who picked him up from Sebastian’s—

Fuck.

Sherlock’s insides curl up. He feels like he’s going to fall down, and the idea seems oddly pleasant; lying down on the cool floor, away from the pesky thoughts of Sebastian’s unwelcome hands on his body. He should have realized, he should have known, he should never have teased Sebastian so much, now look where that’s landed him—

“Are you alright?”

Sherlock flinches. He turns around, and John is standing at the doorway to the kitchen, looking concerned. Sherlock remembers John looking at him like that last night, and the way his heart picks up at John’s gaze depresses him considerably.

“I’m fine,” he says quietly, feeling miserable and guilty. “You can sit there if you want,” he gestures to the table with his chin.

“Alright.” John takes a seat. Sherlock moves to the fridge and opens it, bending and peering to see if he’s got any milk. He does. Mycroft sent groceries last week.

“Is that a head?”

“What?” Sherlock stands up straight and looks at John.

“A head. In your fridge.”

“What? Oh,” he says rather stupidly. “Yes, it’s a head.”

John nods, as if he’s trying to make sense of that. “Why is there a head in your fridge?” He doesn’t sound disgusted, or frightened. Curious, and a trifle amused. He sits with his legs spread far apart, and the chair is turned so it’s facing Sherlock, his elbow resting on the table. His shirt is wrinkled and rumpled from where he slept on the sofa.

“I’m checking the coagulation of saliva after death,” Sherlock quickly takes out the carton of milk and closes the door shut.

“I was thinking you’d say, *because I’m a serial killer,* and I’d be cursing myself for sleeping in the same house as a murderer,” John smiles, and it’s a crude, flirtatious thing. Sherlock feels his cheeks
heat up in spite of himself. Is he being chatted up? He’s not sure.

“That would make for a far more interesting morning,” he replies, pouring milk into the steaming mugs. “And how do you know I’m not a serial killer? Hardly something I would tell you.” He puts a mug in front of John.

John smiles again, and Sherlock wants to catalogue it. He doesn’t remember the last time he’s made someone smile that much. And John’s smile is particularly lovely. He watches as he blows on his tea before he sips it; thin lips, but nicely shaped. His hair is longish; it touches just the tops of his ears at the front, but curls up slightly at his nape. It’s ash blonde; Sherlock wants to run it between his finger tips to see what it feels like.

From a particularly scientific stand point, obviously.

“I’m guessing if you wanted to kill me, you would have done that by now. I hope you haven’t poisoned my tea.”

“You’re right. Killing you would be easy. But no, not poison. Not interesting enough. Not in this case, at least. It would be easily traceable. And you’re a medical student. You might notice.”

“Should I be flattered or scared?” John raises an eyebrow at Sherlock over the rim of his cup.

“You’re choice,” Sherlock tells him.

John laughs then, and Sherlock feels his own lips twitch. John’s laughter is infectious, he finds himself chuckling into his cup.

“I’m sorry, this is ridiculous,” John says, between spurts of mirth. “I was going to apologise to you and everything, but here I am, flirting. Christ, I’m a right prick.”

“For what?” Sherlock asks, but he really means to ask, are you really flirting with me?

“It was a bit creepy of me to stay over night,” John says sheepishly. “And I’m really sorry if I overstepped. I just- I was just worried you might need help, and I couldn’t leave you like that. I’m honestly surprised you haven’t kicked me out yet.”

“You’re assuming I didn’t consider that.”

“Did you?”

“Of course. But you’re still here, so you needn’t be worried.” Sherlock opens a new file in his mind palace, names it John Watson and catalogues the shape of John’s smile, and the way he takes his tea.

He feels sick with himself for doing it. For wanting to do it.

“I’m here for the tea,” John informs him cheerfully, and raises his mug. “But I should leave soon… my roommates will be looking for me.”

“Two of them,” Sherlock notes. “Both betas. One of them… has a dog. And you play clarinet. And you’re not very good at it. You should take up something easier. Rugby should be enough to keep you occupied. Clearly you’re not musically inclined, so-oh. It was to impress someone- no-” he pauses, narrows his eyes. “You had a crush on your teacher.”

The tips of John’s ears glow red. Sherlock gives him a slow smile.

“Yeah, you did some of that last night,” John says, embarrassed, but grinning. “It’s pretty amazing.
How do you do it?”

“You think it’s amazing?” Sherlock cocks his head at him. John Watson thinks he’s amazing.
“People don’t normally use that word.”

Amazing.

/əˈmeɪzɪŋ/

Amazing; key: adjective

-verysurprising, especially in a way that makes you feel pleasure or admiration

-an amazing achievement/discovery/success/performance

synonyms; astonishing, astounding, confounding, confusing, perplexing, bewildering, stupendous, wonderful, surprising, marvelous, prodigious, portentous, miraculous—

“Really? What do they say?”

Sherlock blinks at him. “What they say isn’t appropriate for polite company.”

Fuck off freak stupid whore idiot get away from me shut your mouth or I’ll shut it for you slut weirdo freak freak freak freak

John looks angry, shocked; it confuses Sherlock for a moment before he realises neither of those emotions are directed at him. John is angry at another party, angry- why? Because they didn’t appreciate Sherlock? Why? Why would it make him angry? It doesn’t make sense. Why doesn’t it make sense? Sherlock wants to ask him, wants to shake his shoulders and figure out why he’s becoming so rapidly obsessed with this clearly unremarkable person.

“Maybe they’re jealous of you,” John offers, eyes still hard. “Some people are like that. Can’t see someone else being smarter than them, especially an omega.”

Sherlock feels his stomach drop.

John knows.

Well, of course he knows. He dropped you home last night, his mind supplies, but he can’t help the way a flush creeps up his neck. He doesn’t have to wonder how John knows, he can remember clawing his fingers into John’s shirt and trying to scent him.

“I’ll take that,” he says, his tone suddenly brusque. John notices, looking up in alarm as Sherlock grabs his empty mug and sets them hard in the sink. It’s a wonder they don’t shatter. Sherlock would prefer if they did. It would make them forget all about how idiotic Sherlock is and they could concentrate on something else.

“Hey, Sherlock, listen—“ John starts. He hears the scrape of the chair against the floor as he pushes it away.

“Don’t,” Sherlock turns towards him and fixes him with a glare.

John holds up his hands. “I’m sorry,” he says, his voice quiet and contrite. Sherlock hates it. “I’m sorry I found out the way I did, I honestly didn’t mean to invade your privacy, I swear. I know you keep it a secret, and I understand why. I’m really sorry, Sherlock, and I won’t mention it again.”
Sherlock leans against the sink, closing his eyes and pinching the bridge of his nose. He takes a deep, shuddering breath. “It’s not your fault,” he says, trying to sound calm. “I-I should have been more responsible.”

He hears John sigh in relief, probably grateful that Sherlock isn’t shouting at him. “Everyone makes mistakes,” he says.

“I’m not everyone,” Sherlock snaps, eyes open.

“Just because you’re smarter than the rest of us doesn’t mean you’re not human,” John rejoins patiently, and Sherlock wants to throw something at him. Or climb into his lap and kiss the patience out of him. Either would work.

“I was reckless. And I-I shouldn’t have been reckless with Sebastian. I should have known. I should have figured it out.”

“Sherlock,” John says, and his voice is soft, as if he’s speaking to a wounded animal. And Sherlock should normally hate it; but he finds himself responding to it anyway- he has to fight the urge to bend his head and take the comfort that John is offering. “It’s not your fault,” he continues, and curls a hand around Sherlock’s bicep. His palm is warm. Sherlock feels it through the satin. “It really isn’t.”

Sherlock looks down at him, (he’s around 5’6.5”, about six inches shorter than Sherlock) at the kindness in John’s gaze. It isn’t cloying, or stifling; John doesn’t push his way into his personal space and demand attention. Sherlock gives it him of his own accord. “Maybe you should have been more careful, yeah, but only a fucking wanker would take advantage of you like that. Don’t blame yourself for this.”

Sherlock is silent for a few moments. He can feel his heart beat steadily against his chest. thud. thud. thud.

“I’ve never met anyone quite like you before,” he finally says, and John grins.

“Because there isn’t anyone quite like me.” He takes his hand away from Sherlock, and then gently pushes him out of the way. “Let me wash that.”

“What?”

John turns on the tap and starts rinsing the mugs. “You made the tea, I’ll wash them. It’s only polite.” Is he changing the subject? Why? Does he know it makes Sherlock uncomfortable? Is he being nice?

“Politeness is boring,” Sherlock replies automatically. John laughs.

He puts them on the counter to dry. “I’m sorry to disappoint you.”

“You’re not disappointing at all.”

John looks surprised, turning towards him with a rather bashful smile. “That’s the nicest thing you’ve said to me since last night.”

Sherlock responds with a smile of his own. “I’m not nice.”

“Now don’t ruin my impression of you,” John jokes, wiping his wet hands on his jeans. “But while it lasts—” he digs his hands into his pocket and emerges with a pen. It doesn’t have a cap, and the ink is almost over. John shakes it, and then grabs Sherlock’s hand.
“What—”

John is scribbling something down on his skin. The nib tickles. “You could call me. Later. Sometime. Anytime. If you need help again. If you just want to go out for coffee.”


“We’ll find something interesting enough for you then.”

“Do you really want to go out with a junkie, John?”

“We’re not going out,” John says, unmindful of Sherlock’s snark, pocketing his pen. “I’m asking you as a friend. Unless you want me to ask you out.”

Sherlock just raises his eyebrows.

“Shit. Do you have a mate?” He’s blushing. Actually blushing. Sherlock continues to look at him, amused.

“You’re not bonded, then, right?”

I’m flattered by your interest but I must tell you I’m-

Not interested

Not looking for anything right now

It’s not you it’s me

I’m not good enough for you, I will ruin you, I’m just suited for one kind of thing; you don’t want me; people have wanted me before and it hasn’t ended well

“Go home, John,” Sherlock tells him mildly, clenching his hand into a fist where it’s at his side.

“Yeah. Yeah, I should be going. You’re feeling fine, right? I didn’t even ask you. Sorry.”

“I’m fine.”


He grabs his coat and swings it over his shoulder, and before he leaves, he smiles brightly at Sherlock like Sherlock’s his...his mate, or something, and Sherlock feels furious with him. For making him want.

When the door clicks shut, he runs his palm underneath the tap and viscously rubs at his skin until the numbers are gone.

It would have been immensely satisfying; cathartic, even; if only he hadn’t already committed them to memory.

***

It occurs to John only once he’s outside that he hadn’t told Sherlock his name. He’d told him yesterday, and by his own admission he hadn’t remembered much. But he remembered his name.
He remembered his *name*, and he has no idea why that should make him so unreasonably happy.

***
Chapter Summary

“The nature of my-what? Relationship? We don’t have one. I met him once.”

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

---

*in the rain-
darkness, the sunset
being sheathed i sit and
think of you

e.e. Cummings

The dream starts, as they’ve all been starting, with the dark haired boy’s smile. Usually these kind of dreams aren’t too detailed, either they’re ludicrous situations that would never conceivably happen (because they’re too unrealistic or rather exploitive) or they simply start with John’s cock in someone’s arse.

This time the object of his lust smiles; knife bright, eyes sparkling, and he says something to him, something John can’t hear because he’s too busy thinking about the way his throat looks so delicate, so untouched, makes him think about what it would look like after John’s had his mouth on him.

But John doesn’t kiss him first- he holds his hand, laces their fingers together until he can feel the warmth of his palm sliding against his. Sherlock laughs, mouth wide, eyes scrunched up, hair falling across his forehead. John can’t remember what he says, only that it makes Sherlock smile and fuck if he hasn’t seen anything more gorgeous. Then John is kissing him, tasting the honey-rosewater sweetness of him, the way his body goes pliant and limp under him, and he’s tickling Sherlock, drawing the laughter out of him-

God, then he’s buried in him to the hilt, he’s moaning and gasping and clawing at the sheets-John has a hand wrapped lightly around his throat while he thrusts into him, an act of ownership, of you belong to me, and I belong to you, and Sherlock, Sherlock is crying out his name and give it to me, John-
John wakes up, sweating and panting.

Fuck.

He stares at the ceiling, the sheets wrapped tightly around his legs. This is the third time this week he’s another intensely weird, intensely sexual dream about Sherlock and it’s honestly not doing anything for him. Sherlock hasn’t called or contacted him and John can only assume Sherlock doesn’t want anything to do with him. That’s fine. But it doesn’t change the fact that he’s just dreamt about fucking him and his cock is hard enough to burst through his pyjamas.

He feels oddly like a voyeur, as if thinking about Sherlock that way is out of bounds- he doesn’t even know him, and sure, he’s pretty- very pretty- but it must be creepy to fantasize about someone you’ve only just met.

He takes a deep, shaky breath, his hand curling over his erection. His hips jerk, and Sherlock’s bright, silver eyes flash before his face. That mouth. That fucking mouth.

***

“You alright, mate?” Craig asks him over breakfast, concerned. John looks at him over the rim of his mug.

“I’m fine,” he answers. “Just...tired.” He rubs his eyes for emphasis.

It’s true- he is. He was too afraid to fall asleep and slip into another dream about Sherlock, and waking up, feeling even worse than before.

Craig looks unconvinced, but doesn’t say anything. “Well, we’ve got to leave now if we want to make it to class.”

John washes the mugs quickly, leaves them upside down on the counter to dry. He’s got things to do. No point pining after someone he might (won’t) meet again. It’s tempting to simply land up at his flat, he knows where he lives- but that would be the worst possible thing to do, so John slips his bag over his shoulder and tries not to think about it.

***

John decides to walk home alone. He didn’t think about Sherlock much all day- classes were distracting, it made him tired. But now that he doesn’t have cadaver fluids smeared over his hands and demanding his attention, he keeps asking himself why he didn’t take Sherlock’s number when he had the chance. What a wasted opportunity.

Suddenly, with a prickling sensation, John turns around. A sleek black car drives slowly beside him, at a snail’s pace. The car draws to a halt when John stops, staring at it.

“What the-”

His mobile buzzes. He takes it out, flicks open the new message.
Get in the car.

A second later-

Mr. Watson.

John’s heart thuds uncomfortably in his chest. He looks down at the message and at the car again.

“I think not,” he mutters under his breath, slips his phone into his pocket again, and continues walking.

The car follows him.

“For God’s sake,” he breathes, considers running. The car would probably outrun him. Not to mention the fact that he has no idea who is inside the car. He takes an irritated breath. This was decidedly not what he wanted when he meant that he needed a distraction.

His phone buzzes again. Maybe he shouldn’t reply to the message at all. Some wanker was playing a stupid joke on him. Though why he’d (or she) go to such lengths- that was an expensive car.

Curiosity gets the better of him, however, and he checks the new message.

Don’t be stupid, John.

He knows his name. John stops again, turns around to glare angrily at the car, which has also stopped.

“What do you want,” he demands.

The door opens, and someone steps out. A woman. A very- pretty woman. John stares at her, can’t control his conditioned sniffing. But she doesn’t smell like anything. Not an alpha, definitely.

She’s texting, her eyes on her mobile, and when she looks up she shoots him a bland smile. “Get in, Mr. Watson.”

“What- who are you?”

“That’s not important, Mr. Watson. Get in.” She says it with the air of someone who knows they won’t be disobeyed. She’s a little scary. Without waiting for a reply, she gets back inside the car, keeping the door open.

John stands on the pavement for a few more seconds, wondering how his morning has suddenly morphed into some bad version of a Bond movie. He’s not about to get into some stranger’s car, no matter how pretty that woman was-

Except he does, and then his phone chirps again:

Thank you, Mr. Watson.
This day was definitely getting weirder.

Whoever the woman was- she said her name was Anthea- but John was quite sure she was lying- had dropped him off at an abandoned car park, and left, still tapping away at her phone.

John stands there for a minute, wondering if he should just make a run for it- when someone calls his name behind him.

“Mr. Watson.”

He turns around, and there is a man in front of him, smiling at him insincerely. John notices his eyes first: bright silver; achingly familiar. But these ones are different. Nothing knife-sharp about them- his gaze is cool, calculating, someone who is used to intimidating people. Well, John’s not going to let himself be intimidated.

“Yeah, that’s my name, well done. Also, who the hell are you?”

The man tilts his head, smiles like he finds John highly amusing. He’s dressed in an expensive suit- manicured hands, the beginnings of a paunch around his middle. Looks a few years older than him.

“An interested party,” he replies smoothly.

“Interested in what?” John looks around, wonders if he’s going to be murdered here. The man continues to smile.

“What is the nature of your relationship with Sherlock Holmes?”

John’s head whips around. “The nature of my-what? Relationship? We don’t have one. I met him once.”

He raises his eyebrows. “And yet within the course of that one day you picked him up from whatever cesspool he had been visiting, followed him home, and stayed the night. Sherlock never lets anyone stay the night. Unless he was coerced, Mr. Watson, I see no reason why you should have been there. Shall I make my question any clearer?”

John swallows. Narrows his eyes at the man. “I don’t think that’s any of your business.”

“It could be.”

“It really couldn’t.”

For a moment he thinks the man is finally at a loss- he glares at John, but only for a second- before schooling his expression back into one of polite indulgence. He puts one hand into his pocket.

“Sherlock is very clever,” he tells John. “I wouldn’t be wrong to say that perhaps the only person cleverer than him is standing here in front of you.”

“Is there a point to any of this?”
“A point? Why yes, Mr. Watson, I always have a point. He steps closer to him, one fluid movement until John’s personal space is completely eclipsed. John has a feeling it’s done with the intention of forcing him to step back, but he stays where he is.

“I’d remind you to watch yourself, that’s all.”

“Who the hell are you?” John asks again, tilting his head up to glare at him. John knows he’s short, but he knows he doesn’t have to be any taller to get this git out of his face.

“I told you-”

His words are cut off by the sound of John’s mobile chirping. It echoes. John ignores the man’s offended expression and takes out his phone to check his messages.

It’s from Sherlock.

_Are you available today?_  

_SH_

John is aware that he’s probably grinning like an idiot at the screen. Sod this fake James Bond ponce- Sherlock just asked if he was _available_. He quickly types out a reply:

_Absolutely. What do you have in mind?_

He hopes it doesn’t sound too suggestive. Does it? Well, it’s been sent.

“Am I distracting you, Mr. Watson?”

John looks up. “No, ‘course not, I’m all ears. You were threatening me a second ago. You can go on, if you want.” He grins.

The man looks appalled at John’s callous behaviour. Before either of them can say anything, John’s phone chirps again.

_ANYTHING, really._  

_SH_

John replies.

_Give me a place and I’ll be there as soon as I can._
Btw, I’m with someone who says he’s your arch enemy.

Do people have arch enemies?

Ps why do you sign your texts

“Mr. Watson, I do not mean to threaten you.”

“Oh yeah, mate, you do,” John assures him, wondering if he should just walk away.

This time he looks furious. Before he can use another thinly-veiled threat, another mobile rings. Clear, default. They both look at each before the man rolls his eyes and slips his mobile out of his pocket.

He doesn’t get a chance to fit a word in- John can hear the sound of static as someone shouts at him from the other end of the line. Mycroft looks up to the ceiling as if begging for divine intervention.

John watches with a growing sense of amusement.

“I haven’t done anything to him, what kind of person do you think I am?” he snaps.

More static.

“I’m only being- yes, alright, alright!” he slides the phone down his ear and thrusts it towards John.

“He wants to speak to you.”

John raises an eyebrow. “Who?”

“Just take the phone.”

John does. “Hello?” he asks tentatively.

“Hello, John. I see you’re in bit of a spot.”

John almost closes his eyes so he can savour the sound of Sherlock’s deep voice. “I’m fine,” he replies. “How do you know this man?”

“He’s my brother. His name is Mycroft Holmes and he’s probably the most dangerous man you’ll ever meet.”

“Your- what?”

“I said he’s my brother.”

‘I heard you the first time. I just- he doesn’t seem very-”

Mycroft looks expectantly at him, as if he’s waiting for John to use a wrong word.

"-"brotherly,” he finishes. Mycroft rolls his eyes.

“Tell him to sod off and walk away. He can’t do a thing to you.”
“I’m not scared of him. Hang on- didn’t you say he was the most dangerous-”

“Trust me, John. He won’t lay a finger on you. Go on, tell him to sod off, I’d love to hear it.”

John lifts his gaze to Mycroft, smiling. “Mycroft, is it?” he asks. “Yeah, well. Sod off.”

Mycroft’s lip curls in disgust. “You’re not very frightened of me, are you?”

John laughs. “You’re not very frightening.”

“Oh that was good, John, very clever,” Sherlock encourages him. “You can also tell him to keep his big nose out of my business or I’ll go off the map and he’ll never be able to find me.”

“Yeah, you can tell him that. I’m leaving. I’ll be there as soon as I can.”

Silence for a few seconds. “I- I’m looking forward to it, John.”

John, still smiling, cuts the call and hands Mycroft’s fancy phone back to him.

“You’re either very brave or very stupid,” he comments, flicking through his phone before pocketing it. “Though honestly speaking, they’re quite the same thing.”

“You can relax...Mr. Holmes.”

“No I can’t, Mr. Watson.” Mycroft fixes him with a cold stare while his mouth presses into a hard line. “I’ve told you before and I’ll tell you again. Watch your step.”

John knows, this time, that it’s not an idle threat. For all his unnecessary drama, Mycroft Holmes looks like someone who means business, and he doesn’t think any version of “You don’t have to worry” will work on him.

“I’ll- I’ll keep that in mind,” he tells him, voice level, and leaves.

***

He feels like a huge tiger in a tiny cage, stifled and too warm and itching to get out of his own skin. He wraps his own dressing gown tighter around himself and curls up on his armchair in front of the fire. His feet are cold but he’s too lazy to get himself some socks. He can’t believe he texted John. Actually texted him. And John agreed. To meet him.

He checks his phone again, just to re read his messages.

He sends one to Mycroft to remind him to back off.

Keep your fat nose out of my business.

SH

Mycroft replies immediately.
Be careful.

MH

Sherlock scoffs, puts his phone away.

He feels a little pathetic, but there was just something about John Watson that he couldn’t let go of. Previous relationships— if he could call him that— had ended badly because of his inability to control his feelings. Sherlock doesn’t want that to happen again. He doesn’t want to feel the crippling sting of rejection, of being pushed out of someone’s life when they’ve had enough. Or people crawling back because they think you’re still in the same place, waiting.

Sherlock is tired of waiting.

He tells himself that it’s a distraction; and it is, to certain extent. He doesn’t feel like taking anything—not blindingly so. The want still itches beneath his skin, but he shoves it down.

Someone rings the bell.

Sherlock nearly trips over himself in his haste to get to the door. He’s aware he looks a mess, and part of it is because he doesn’t want to make himself go through that again either— trying to impress someone who might not care three days later.

When he opens the door, it isn’t John.

“Get out,” he tells Sebastian, almost shakily, but Sebastian stops the closing door with his foot.

“I’m here to apologise,” he says tightly.

“I don’t want an apology,” Sherlock says between his teeth. He doesn’t need this— not now, not when he’s just managed to convince himself that maybe, maybe it wasn’t his fault. Sebastian’s voice brings his own stupidity to the light, makes him want to do anything for him if it means getting something in return.

“Let me in, Sherlock, please.”

Sherlock can defend himself. He’s not drunk, or high, and if he lets Sebastian talk and purge himself of his self-inflicted guilt he might leave him alone.

“Fine,” he decides, and opens the door wider.

Sebastian steps in, as always, with the confidence and grace of someone who is used to having doors opened for him. Sherlock puts distance between them immediately. Sebastian shuts the door behind him, and Sherlock feels stifled and unsafe, even in his own flat.
“I, er,” his eyes flick down Sherlock’s body, quick and nervous, as if he’s afraid of being caught. Sebastian is well dressed, hair combed and shirt pressed, and is missing a class at uni just to come to meet him. It doesn’t hide the purpling bruise around the corner of his eye, spreading from his temple to the crest of his cheekbone.

Coffee this morning for breakfast, nothing else- took a tube instead of his car. Sherlock wants to smack his head to stop the stream of deductions.

“Sebastian,” he says evenly. “You don’t have to apologise.”

Sebastian smiles at him in reply, though the smile doesn’t reach his eyes. “You’ve been ignoring my texts. Does this mean- ah-” he clears his throat. “You don’t want our arrangement anymore?’

“I never said that,” Sherlock says quickly.

Sebastian’s eyebrow goes up. “No?”

They’re still standing close to the door. Sebastian steps closer to him, Sherlock takes a step backward. Sebastian notices the movement, smirks at Sherlock’s discomfort.

“I have a gift.”

Sherlock swallows. His eyes track Sebastian’s hand- slipping into his trouser pocket and taking out a plastic bag, tied off at the top. He takes Sherlock’s wrist, presses a kiss there, before winking at him and closing his fingers around the bag.

“Your favourite,” he continues. “Consider this an apology. I’m sorry.”

Sherlock feels a faint buzzing under his skin. The siren call of habit. He turns around, away from Sebastian’s knowing smile, and shoves the bag under sofa cushions. It’ll stay there until he needs it.

“Let’s not pretend like this a gift,” he counters, his back still to Sebastian.

“If you say so, love.”

“Whatever you want,” he goes on, taking a deep breath. “But not now.”

He can feel Seb closer to him now, standing right behind him, one hand curls around his shoulder as he pulls Sherlock back gently.

“I said-”

“I heard what you said.” Mouth pressing lightly beneath his ear. Sebastian sniffs him to his heart’s content. “I’ll keep what you said in mind.”

Sherlock swallows down the bile rising in his throat. This wasn't a gift, it was a reminder. How he wish he could push it back into his hands and tell he didn't him or his stupid gift. Instead he stands rigid as Sebastian's tongue slide down his neck.

"Stop," he says. "Stop."

Sebastian pulls away, but the grip on his shoulder tightens, almost painful. "Listen, you-"

The bell rings.

Sherlock elbows Sebastian somewhere in the vicinity of his chest, pushes him back. Sebastian
swears at him.

“You-” panic stems in his gut. What would John think, if he saw Sebastian here? Fuck. John is never going to see him again.

“We?” Sebastian prompts, confused. He looks at the door and back to Sherlock. “Who the hell is it? The police? Did you fucking call the police?”

Sherlock takes a moment out of his panic to stare at Sebastian, dumb founded. “Are you really that stupid?”

Sebastian looks offended. “I was simply-”

“No, it’s not the police-”

The bell rings again.

He groans, scrapes a hand across his face. Sebastian is too dumb for Sherlock to explain to him the mechanics of the situation, and too stubborn to leave through the fire escape. Knocking him out is out of the question, it would take too much time to hide his body. The only solution available to him is to let John in and find some acceptable way to explain why the man who technically assaulted him (from John’s perspective) is doing in his room.

“Forget it,” Sherlock mutters darkly, and moves towards the door. He wishes he was wearing something better.

When he opens it, John is standing on his doorstep, looking nervous and lovely. His hair looks neater then when he had last seen it.

Sherlock somehow closes the door halfway and squeezes his body halfway outside. John’s look of adorable happiness turns to one of confusion.

“My flat is in a mess,” Sherlock tells him. John frowns.

“That’s..fine,” he replies. “I- ugh, didn’t really expect you to get back to me.”

“Neither did I,” Sherlock blurts out. He regrets it immediately. “That is to say-”

“Sherlock, what the bloody hell--”

John’s frown deepens. “Do you- do you have somebody in the flat with you?”

Sherlock shuts his eyes, a frustrated exhale escaping his mouth. “Not exactly,” he says tightly.

Suddenly he feels the brush of a body against his hip, and he almost loses his balance as someone wrenches open the door.

John’s gaze lifts to look straight as Sebastian. For a few seconds, it’s obvious he can’t place him. Except eventually he does, and his lips turn down in a look of utter disgust.

“I know you,” he says. Practically a snarl.

John advances towards him, Sherlock notices his hand balled up at his side as if he’s about to punch him. He steps between them, alarmed. “John, no-”

“No, let him,” Sebastian says smoothly, and pulls Sherlock away by the back of dressing gown. “I
was drunk then, but I’m not—"

Sherlock doesn’t even have time to stop John from grabbing Sebastian by the lapel of his shirt and slamming him head first into the wall outside. Nostrils flaring, eyes wide- he wrenches Sebastian’s arm behind and pins it against his back. Sebastian’s teeth are bared in a snarl, he tries to push John off but John is stronger than he looks.

He can smell them both- strong and uncomfortable.

“Stop,” he says. No one hears. “Stop, John, stop.”

“I should have done more than that,” John hisses against his ear. “Nice bruise.”

“Take your hands off me, you fucking-” Sebastian struggles. “I’ll fucking have you put in prison-”

“For God’s sake, enough!” Sherlock shouts this time. John looks up at him, one eyebrow raised.

“This dick tried to-”

“I know what he tried to do. I was there,” Sherlock spits. “Now let go of him. There’s no point.”

John doesn’t look happy about it. His pupils are still dilated, a flush creeping down his neck. Sherlock wants to cry. He doesn’t want John to see him like this, as someone who constantly needs protecting. He doesn’t want John to see him only out of a sense of worry, out of a fear that someone or the other will be propositioning him again.

John relents, releasing Sebastian with a grunt. Sebastian turns around immediately, but he’s evidently in too much pain to do anything except try to stare John down. John tilts his head; a challenge.

“Seb, get out,” Sherlock says tiredly.

“You better watch your step,” he tells John, before leaving, arm still cradled to his chest.

John exhales roughly, and makes a sudden movement that makes Sherlock think he’s about to hit him, but instead he rams his fist against the wall.

“That bloody piece of shit,” he growls, head still bent, the back of his neck bared. Sherlock can see the flush around his ears, his other hand curled up tight. He’s seen Alphas look like this before- angry, ready for a fight. John still seems to be recovering.

“You shouldn’t have done that.”

John looks up at him, one fist still resting against the wall. “I don’t care,” he answers, his voice is still shaking slightly.

“I didn’t need that. That- display- whatever it was.” Sherlock says it firmly, forces it out.

John looks appalled. He straightens himself, stepping away from the wall. “You think that was a display?”

“You don’t have to- all that- I don’t need you to. He wouldn’t have done anything that I didn’t want. And I’m sober now. I could easily keep him off.”

“You shouldn’t need to!” John shouts.

Sherlock rolls his eyes. “Whatever you have to say, I’ve heard it before. Now do us both a favour
and forget about it. Please.”

John doesn’t want to forget it. Sherlock sees it in the stiff line of his shoulders and the heat of his gaze. John sees this in black and white, and whether it’s the alpha in him or any sort of genuine concern, doesn’t seem willing to drop it.

“I-” he begins to say, then stops. His gaze drops, and he turns his head to look at the empty hallway where Sebastian had been fuming down a second ago. “You’re right. I’m sorry,” he finally says, around a heavy exhale.

“Well, now that we’ve got that out of the way,” he says imperiously, not meaning it though; if John could read people as well as he could he would have known. He’s relieved John isn’t pushing it. John seems to be under the impression that he has to save Sherlock from Sebastian, a lecherous man in an expensive suit who’s trying to seduce Sherlock with drugs. Almost comical.

“I gave him a pretty good shiner, though,” John muses, flexing his hand.

The look of immense, almost ridiculous satisfaction on his face startles a laugh out of Sherlock; he’s surprised at it, but it doesn’t stop him. John looks up from his tanned fingers and grins at Sherlock. It’s brilliant, the way his expression can change from furious and murderously bo yish and free.

“So, you did text me today. While I was with your...brother.” He leans against the doorframe, crossing his arms over his chest. Sherlock has a fleeting thought that he should invite John inside, but he’s momentarily distracted by the mischievous look in his eyes.

“I don’t want to talk about my brother.”

“Alright. We don’t have to. I mean, I wasn’t kidnapped or anything.”

For a moment, Sherlock thinks John is offended, and he has a sudden impulse to call Mycroft up and berate him for ruining everything for him again- but John’s eyes are amused and he doesn’t sound angry.

Sherlock clears his throat. “Um…” clears it again. God, he’s never incoherent. “Do you want to come inside? I mean, we don’t have to stay here. We can go out. You’d prefer going out.” He opens the door wider, hoping silently he doesn’t look too expectant. John smiles at him, comfortable, patient while Sherlock babbles. Their earlier argument forgotten, John looks approachable again.

“Yeah, I suppose I should wait to be invited in this time.” There he goes again. Joking. It feels odd to be on this side of the conversation, being apart of the joke instead of being laughed at. “We can do whatever you want, really.”

John walks inside, and Sherlock can’t help noticing how differently John holds himself. It’s a bit like Lestrade, nothing like Sebastian or Victor. John takes up so little space that when his nostrils flare and his eyes go dark it’s like flipping a switch. The thought suddenly lights up in his belly; he’s seen John angry, but not aroused. He wonders if it would be any different. Vic always looked the same. He can imagine it though; he’s seen enough of it to know that John's eyes would go wide and dark, dark red flush blossoming on his skin, fingers itching to bruise.

He swallows, pushing the image down.
John is inside his flat, looking around himself, and Sherlock suddenly feels unsure, off balance. He’s never had an alpha in here except Mycroft, and Sebastian had never come here until today. He never allowed them inside, didn’t fuck around with anyone in his flat; Vic preferred his own place or cheap hotel rooms.

But now, John is here, looking curiously at the skull on the mantelpiece, eyes wide and stance a little weary. Has he labelled Sherlock as a freak already? But then...he wouldn’t come back here if he had, would he?

“There’s a skull here,” John comments lightly, turning around to raise an eyebrow at Sherlock.


“Do I want to know why it’s here?”

Sherlock smirks. “Nicked it.”

“You stole it.”

“The owner was being tiresome. I was bored.”

“And high?” John asks, and Sherlock doesn’t know if it’s a trick question. But John doesn’t sound mocking. He doesn’t sound like he’s joking, either, though.

“Yes,” he says slowly, thinking of the bag of cocaine hidden under the cushions. “Does that bother you?”

John doesn’t answer. He rolls the skull around in his hand, careful while he seemingly examines it. “Do you want to get changed, or do you wanna go out in your pyjamas?”

***

Lestrade texts him while he’s slipping into jeans.

*If you’re sober, I might have something that you’d like.*

His thumb hovers over the keys.

*You mean you’ve got an unsolved case that’s been languishing on your desk for days because you and your incompetent team are incapable of solving it. Try harder, Detective.. SH*

*You’re a prat.*
Sherlock doesn’t bother with a response, instead slipping the mobile back in his pocket.

Outside, he can hear John making tea. The sound of it is oddly comforting. He leans against his door and presses his ear to the wood. When Sherlock sees him, he'll be apologetic, holding up two mugs of tea with a bashful smile. Sherlock has a feeling John Watson makes very good tea indeed.

He allows the feeling to uncurl, slowly and gently in his stomach. He allows it because it's been so long since he's felt like this-years, in fact.

Hopeful.

Chapter End Notes

reviews are life. Please tell me what you think!
"Is this what you want?" he asks, his voice soft. "This is what you want, isn't it?"

Chapter Notes
See the end of the chapter for notes

Come on, skinny love, just last the year.

Pour a little salt, we were never here

John would be lying if he’d said the drugs didn’t bother him.

Of course they bothered him. The first time he’d met Sherlock was when he was so high on cocaine that he’d fallen right into John’s arms. He hadn’t stayed there for very long; granted, but John didn’t want a comatose, unwilling Sherlock anyway.

Seeing Sherlock now, it was difficult to think he could be any other kind of person; the person he’s looking at now, bright eyed, a little bashful- he doesn’t strike him as someone self destructive. But that’s what he is, and despite John’s ever increasing fondness for him, when the sleeves of his shirt pull up, he can’t help his gaze from dropping downward to skate over the track marks and bruises.

It doesn’t help that Sherlock is not particularly self conscious about it; he doesn’t make any move to cover his wrists. John wonders if Sherlock is aware of it, whether it’s a subconscious challenge on his part: so what?

“You don’t like this place,” he finally says.

Sherlock looks at him over the rim of his mug, and John can see his mouth pull up in a wry smile.

“How could you tell?” He puts the mug down, soft pink tongue darting out to lick the corner of his lips.

“You’ve been tapping your foot incessantly,” John points out. “I know you’re the smart one, but I’m not an idiot. Do you have something against coffee shops?”

“I’m impressed,” Sherlock says, leaning forward; his slender fingers steeple against his mouth,
elbows on the table. In someone else it would have seemed flirtatious. Sherlock barely skirts the line, but he doesn’t seem to be trying to be coy. He cocks his head to one side, his eyes following something behind John. “No, I don’t like public places in general. Coffee shops are the worst; they’re boring, they’re tedious, and they’re dull. I enjoy coffee. I don’t enjoy being forced into drinking this over priced rot for the price of a conversation.” John laughs; he can’t help it. Sherlock seems honestly nettled, the smirk on his face has melted into more of a scowl, as he surveys the denizens of the shop with barely veiled contempt. His dark brows furrow. It's cute.

“Why’d you let me bring you here, then?”

His gaze sweeps back to John, and he seems to think for a moment before he answers. “I was bored, you were interesting, I was too lazy to make my own coffee. Also, after that testosterone rush with Sebastian, you seemed in need of placating.”

“I’m not that kind of alpha,” John argues. It seems to be exactly what Sherlock was expecting. This time his smile has teeth.

“I know, I was kidding. You gave me your number, so I allowed this,” he shrugs, takes another sip out of his mug. “It’s not terrible. My brother would be devastated to know this is what I do with alphas my age.”

“Wasting away at pedestrian joints like this?”

“Exactly.”

"Come on, it can't be that bad. There must be a reason people come here so often," John teases. He wonders if Sherlock appreciates the flirting. Going by the slightly amused tilt of his mouth, he'd have to say yes. Maybe he's just tolerating it, since he's already convinced that John needs placating.

"Same reason anyone goes anywhere. To get a leg over," he says, assuredly, eyes darting over the customers. "People don't have much else on their minds."

"That's...sceptical," John pronounces, around a rush of breath. Sherlock stares at him, looking worried, as though he's said something wrong. "It's alright," John hastens to assure him. "It's true, I suppose. But I'm not here to get a leg over." "Pity. That blonde one over there is interested in you," Sherlock gestures with his cup towards the back of the shop. John turns around- surely enough, a gangly, blonde haired boy is staring back at him. Caught off guard by John's gaze, he starts, but then his lips spread into an easy smile. His fingers wiggle in a little wave. He's sitting alone, near the window, a book on his table. The tips of his blonde hair are dyed brown. Cute-ish. Going by his slender build and the boyish features, not an alpha.

"Not my type," John says, turning back to Sherlock, who has been observing him like a hawk. It's a lie; and Sherlock can tell. He smirks. John would have given the boy his number had he not been with Sherlock. Had he never met Sherlock, in fact.

"Please," Sherlock scoffs. "That's exactly your type. I can pick out two other people, if you like- who you'd go home with on a regular day."

Sherlock thrums with energy. John is fascinated by it- he seems to be characterised by this, sudden bursts of energy between relaxed, languid periods. It's like turning a switch, and John finds it impossibly arousing.

He doesn't even wait for his response. "The red haired barista-" John follows his gaze. Short, curvy,
full breasts, nice smile, nice arse. She's busy serving a customer their latte, but when she looks up, she meets John's eyes, and gives him that same soft smile. She turns away just as quickly, to serve someone else. Her eyes are grey. "Mmm. Beta. She's studying some sort of science, if I could guess, I'd say microbiology or marine biology. She plays hockey. Strong thighs. You'd like that, wouldn't you? Do you know women are capable of snapping a person's neck with their thighs? Especially a woman like that, if you know how, that is."

John raises his eyebrows. "How do you know that?"

Sherlock rolls his eyes. "I read, John. I observe. I told you, I'm clever. Now, look at that one with the curly hair sitting with that man in a suit- hmm. They're seeing each other, but she's planning to break it off. I think you'd like her."

Sherlock is right, as usual. The girl has luscious dark hair that falls to her waist, a slender structure except for her hips, which are wide, tapering down to a delicate ankle. Her skin is dark, to match her eyes, and her lips are now in a pretty moue of disdain, directed at her partner.

"She looks like she'd flip me over and spank me," John observes.

"Nope. She'd like you to spank her, though. That's why I said you'd be interested."

Sherlock looks unaffected by what he's just said, his tone devoid of any lascivious or scintillating intent, and John can only stare at him, unable to control his arousal. It's like something being set on fire in his brain. *Do you like being spanked*, he suddenly finds himself wanting to ask. *How the hell do you know what I'd like?* He doesn't. He wants to, though.

"How on earth could you know that?"

Sherlock smiles at him devilishly. "I observe," he repeats.

"You're ridiculous. But I'm not interested in any of them, as interesting as they may be."

Sherlock cocks his head. It's almost unnerving, being on the receiving end of that gaze. Flattering, too. John feels like he's being pulled apart, his deepest fantasies exposed. It makes him want to take Sherlock in his mouth, make him lose that self-possession, that tight control. He's seen Sherlock like that. He wants to see it again; in more consensual conditions, of course. But that image has haunted him ever since. It's not something that you can forget, very easily, especially when Sherlock seems to take every step not to appear that way again.

"Why not?" he asks, honestly sounding curious.

"Because I'm here with you, you great prat."

Sherlock blinks. "I- that's true," he finishes lamely. "Is that why you're ignoring compatible partners? Because you see me as a prospective one?"

"I see you as someone I'd like to have coffee with."

"Well, since I don't particularly like wasting away here with this sub par coffee, that's not very flattering," he informs him mildly. John thinks he's serious before his lips blossom into a shy smile. It's lovely.

"Where would you have chosen to go?" he challenges.

The question catches him off guard. His silver gaze narrows, and he stares at John. "Depends….." his voice trails off. He looks down at the table, and his fingers drum a rhythm less tune. "I don't do this
very often. I have no idea what the other person would expect. I wouldn’t want to disappoint them.”

“I don’t think you’d disappoint them at all. Surprise them, maybe, like you did with that head in your kitchen,” the reference causes him to blush, slightly. “But not disappoint.”

“Well, I wouldn’t bring them here, for one thing,” he says airily. “Somewhere more...exciting.”

“Like a...what? A pub? A club?”

“No,” Sherlock replies hotly. “And have someone grope me all night? No thank you. Pubs are for pulling. Assuming I’ve already pulled-”

“So we’re describing a date then?”

“Of course I’m describing a date.”

“This is a date, then?”

Sherlock’s cheeks are flaming pink. John finds it fascinating, how easy it is to make him blush. For a second his thoughts start to stray to more inappropriate directions, but he reins them in. “Like I said, I don’t do this normally,” Sherlock continues in a quiet voice. “So I’m unsure what this qualifies as. You said you hadn’t asked me out.”

“That was because of how frightened you looked when I wrote my number on your hand.”

“I wasn’t frightened-”

“Why don’t you tell me where you’d take me?”

“So it’s you we’re talking about? Like I said. Somewhere exciting. But I don’t know what people find exciting anymore. I’ve...made mistakes with that sort of thing. So if I perceive a mutual benefit, I just let the other person choose.”

Something bothers John about the way Sherlock speaks- he can’t put his finger on it. What kind of mistakes? There seem to be layers of sadness in the things he just glosses over, and it makes John want to slow down, hold his hand, ask him to stop at the important bits. Being with Sherlock is so confusing; he talks so much but says so little. Why are you so sad, Sherlock?

Instead, he asks, “What mutual benefits?” and Sherlock very simply replies, “Sex.”

This time John can feel his cheeks heating up. He shouldn’t respond this viscerally to someone saying a dirty word- if sex qualifies as a dirty word- but the way Sherlock says it, clinically- lights something up in John’s lizard brain.

“So if you,” he clears his throat- “Ah- if you-”

“If I think I’ll get a fuck out of it, yes, I’ll just let the other person take the lead. But sometimes it’s not just a fuck, is it?” He drains the rest of his coffee. “Hmmm. Sometimes a fuck just isn’t enough,” he seems to look through John when he says it, as though he’s talking about something faraway and distant. “Doesn’t matter though, I don’t do it.”

“You made an exception for me, though,” John replies, trying to ignore the jaded way Sherlock talks about sex.

He smiles, soft, this time. His eyes aren’t as hard as before. “I did, didn’t I?” He looks out of the
window their seat is next to. “God knows what possessed me,” he says under his breath, John is unsure whether he’s supposed to hear it or not.

“I have an idea,” he says, suddenly. The sight of Sherlock’s profile, his dark hair made auburn by the sunlight, thoughtful look in his silver eyes, makes John wonder what was he thinking, asking this gorgeous clever man out to coffee.

***

“I’m not allowed to be here, am I?” Sherlock asks, looking around the laboratory. His eyes are gleaming. John grins at the look on his face.

“No,” he replies. Sherlock laughs. His fingers trail over some of the equipment. There's a difference to his stance, suddenly; the languidness is gone. He's alert; interested.

“You do realise you’ve shown me how to break into St. Barts whenever I please.” He looks up from a microscope and shoots John a grin.

“Oh dear, have I created a menace? Shame.”

Molly looks between the two of them. “Actually, I’m the one who brought you both in here. John owes me one.”

“And I’m very glad he did, Molly,” Sherlock replies, without missing a beat, leaning forward over the table, towards Molly. His voice is a baritone rumble. John watches, torn between jealousy and arousal. Molly probably mistakes him for a male beta or an alpha, and her cheeks visibly turn pink. John has known her since he started term, and while it's charmingly easy to get Molly to do something if you flatter her enough, John has chosen not to. Until today, when the opportunity presented itself.

“It’s- It’s alright,” she blusters, in response to Sherlock's heated gaze and smirk. Is that how John looks, when Sherlock speaks to him? Is that how Sherlock speaks to him anyway- the posture, the careful and calculated invasion of his space; the slight movement of his elegant fingers over metal and glass-

“I hope you let me in here again, though. It would be such a shame if I could only come here once. I could really do with some of this equipment. I do have access to the university lab, but I don't think I'll get in as much trouble here.” He bends himself over, and his arse sticks out in a way that makes it difficult for John to swallow.

“I could- I could get a visitor's pass for you, if you like.”

Sherlock grins, lopsided, brilliant. “That would be lovely, thank you.” Molly smiles slightly at him, still blushing to the roots of her hair.

"If you need anything else- she mumbles, "Like if you'd like to get a coffee or something-"

John sees this as the point to intervene, and quickly steps in, pulling Sherlock back from Molly by his bicep.

"I think that's enough of that," he says, his voice sounding curt to his own ears. Sherlock looks down at him, the amused tilt of his mouth infuriating John even further

"Are you two friends, then?" Molly asks, putting her goggles back on, realising her chances of pulling Sherlock have decreased.
"I- I suppose," John says slowly, raising an eyebrow at Sherlock. Sherlock raises one back. He's so annoying.

"Where'd you meet?" she asks.

"John found me at an unsavoury establishment where I got so high I passed out," Sherlock replies brightly.

Molly's eyes widen, as if she's unsure of Sherlock's sincerity. "He's being serious," John cuts in. "And now we're leaving. See you around, Molly."

When John starts dragging Sherlock away from the lab, Sherlock says, "You don't like Molly?" "I like her fine," John says defensively. "I don't want her to get the wrong idea."

"What wrong idea?

"I'm sorry, do you want to go back and flirt with her some more?"

Sherlock laughs. "Is that what you call it? Flirting?"

“What do you call it?"

“Getting what I want."

Sherlock is alarmingly close to his ear when he says that; it’s almost a relief when he pushes the door open and they’re hit with sunlight and cold air.

“Don’t go too far to the edge, you might fall,” he warns, watching Sherlock walk out in front of him, openly curious.

“You don’t say," Sherlock says, his voice hushed. He steps out into the rooftop, his back towards John. His hands are in the pockets of his sweatshirt, and John takes a second to stare without Sherlock knowing that he’s staring. He is still, staring at the sky, and John wants to see his expression, but he doesn’t want to ruin the moment. Sherlock looks like an apparition, outlined against the sky like that. He doesn’t seem to be all there, like he doesn’t belong- it’s odd, John thinks, gaze skating over his form- the delicate shoulders, the slender legs- it’s difficult finding a space for Sherlock. He’s so...so different, like a puzzle piece that someone didn’t make with intention of it fitting in anywhere. Maybe Sherlock feels like that too. John wishes he knew how to ask.

He hadn’t chosen the time, particularly. He’d only thought of bringing Sherlock here because he thought he’d like the view and the wind. He hadn’t expected the sky to look so beautiful, for the clouds to be that gorgeous shade of blue-purple-orange, or the sun to be setting quite like that, at this moment.

“Is this what an ideal date is like, then?” Sherlock finally says, breaking the silence. He doesn’t turn around, so John walks up to him instead.

“I don’t really think it works like that,” he answers. He didn’t know Sherlock’s eyes had so many colours in them, or that his eyelashes were that long, or how sharp his cheekbones really were. Sherlock raises one bushy eyebrow. “Then how do they work?”

“I think- I think if it’s with someone you like, even a boring coffee shop can be interesting.”

Sherlock’s smile is a soft, sad thing, and John wonders what he said wrong. He wants to erase it, wants to say anything, something that would take that look off Sherlock’s face.
“That makes sense,” he just says, and sits down, cross legged. He fiddles a bit with the pocket of his jeans, taking out a pack of cigarettes and a lighter.

John sits down next to him, and wordlessly takes the cigarette Sherlock offers him. He doesn’t chain smoke like he’s sure Sherlock does, but he’s a college student, he gets stressed like everyone else.

Sherlock lights it up for him, his own cig hanging lightly from his lips. John is transfixed, for a moment, by the pale flesh around the fag. Sherlock’s beauty is nothing short of ethereal, like nothing he’s ever seen before. Sherlock is like nothing he’s ever seen before.

“I would have wanted to shoot up by now,” Sherlock says, exhaling a cloud of smoke.

John feels a sudden flare of panic. “Do you feel like shooting up?”

Sherlock squints, his eyes following a crow flying over them. “It’s not that simple. If you asked me to snort a line with you, I wouldn’t refuse. But—” he flicked some ash off his cigarette. “I wouldn’t go through all the trouble right now. I’m—” he seems to search for a word. “Content. That doesn’t happen very often.”

John meets his gaze, and smiles. Something warm builds up in his chest. “Well then. We should do this more often, then.”

Sherlock chuckles softly. “I get bored easily, John. You can’t keep milking this rooftop thing, as lovely as it is.”

“Shut up, you said you were content.”

“Hmm,” Sherlock says, and to John’s surprise, stretches, and lays back against the ground, legs drawn up. John looks down at him, and watches Sherlock gazing up at the sky, cigarette glowing in his hand. It’s starting to get dark. He looks- calm. All that restless energy mellowed down to a soft pulse instead. There are shadows nestled in the angles of his face; hiding his features, making his eyes sparkle. John feels like this is a privilege, getting to see Sherlock like this.

“I play the violin when I’m thinking,” he says, suddenly, as if struck by the thought. “But I haven’t played in ages. I feel like playing now. It’s a miracle you don’t forget how to play an instrument. You can get out of practise, though. I could be rusty.”

“Why did you stop?” John asks, lying down next to him as well. He stubs the cigarette and chooses to stuff his hands into his pockets. It’s cold. They’re not touching, just barely- if John shifted a bit they’d be lying down side by side. He wants to get closer, wants to feel the warmth Sherlock must be radiating now- but he stays put.

“I didn’t stop. I just- started doing other things,” he sounds tired. “It got out of control. Now- now it’s hard to go back. Sometimes things just take their course and you have to let them.” Sherlock’s voice sounds distant; John aches to bring him back.

“Can I ask you a question?”

“You already have,” he points out maddeningly.

John pushes him; it makes Sherlock giggle. “Another one, you git.”

“Go ahead. I may not answer, though.”

“How on earth does a university student afford a flat in Central London?”

Sherlock bursts out laughing. It’s the first time John has heard him laugh like that, and he
immediately wants to tease a laugh from him again. When he’s done he asks, “I would think you’d assume something after you’d met my brother.”

“Yeah, your brother is wealthy and dangerous. I don’t see you taking money from him, though.” “My parents, too, are wealthy. Not dangerous, though. Not to you. But you’re right. I haven’t taken money from my brother, or them. My access to the trust fund has been denied for almost a year. No, I got the flat at half price from a woman I met in Florida.”

“I can’t imagine you in Florida,” John says honestly.

“I didn’t imagine myself in Florida either,” says, bemused. "My skin doesn’t catch the sun and America bored me to tears. I did find a very interesting lady, though. Her husband was on death row for numerous crimes, and I offered to help.”

"You got him out of an execution?"

"Oh no," Sherlock says, sounding smug and self satisfied. He watches as he takes a drag from his cigarette. "I ensured it. He was an absolute turd of a human being, used to beat his wife and had affairs. As far as I’m concerned, it was a public service.”

“You’re insane,” John breathes.

Sherlock shrugs, eyes closed. “I’ve been called worse.”

John sits up. “No no- it’s a compliment. It’s- I’m in awe of you, really.”

Sherlock’s eyes spring open. They’re silver lights in the dark. He doesn’t say anything, instead chooses to look at John like he can’t understand him.

“Why do you do that?” he asks, sitting up slowly, one palm on the ground to steady himself.

John looks back at him steadily. “Do what?”

“Compliment me. You called me amazing. Why? I don’t get it. No one’s done it before. You’re not put off by my drug habit, you haven’t called me a whore, and you’ve brought me here- I don’t- I don’t understand, John, what do you want?”

John’s chest is burning. His entire body is burning, in fact. What does he want?

“I’m not- I’m not used to this,” he continues, weakly, and his gaze drops. “I don’t know what is expected of me.”

“What on earth are you talking about?” John demands. His voice makes Sherlock look up in alarm.

“Besides the fact that you’re bloody gorgeous- I won’t lie, I’d be blind to not notice that- you’re- you’re so- I don’t have words to describe it, Sherlock. You’re the most amazing person I’ve met, and I just want to get to know you better, that’s all. You’re dull in comparison to everything else, I suppose. That’s the best I can come up with.”

Sherlock laughs, and it sounds bitter. “I’m not, though. I’m really not.”

“Well, you’re clearly insane,” John decides, and then because so is he, he leans in and kisses Sherlock.

Sherlock freezes, and for a split second John starts to pull away, but Sherlock leans forward, opens his mouth. His lips are cool from the cold air, but the quickly warm up with John's exploring tongue.
The way Sherlock's mouth goes pliant and soft is intoxicating, makes him feel like he could do push Sherlock anyway and Sherlock would just go with it. It calls to that tiny alpha part of his brain which is going take take take take

He grips the back of Sherlock's neck and makes him tilt his head for easier access and Sherlock lets out a soft moan that makes his cock twitch.

They're both kneeling, but suddenly Sherlock twists his fingers into John's jumper and pulls him down on top of him, and Sherlock is underneath him, legs spread around his hips and hands on John's shoulders and fuck-

He bites down on Sherlock's lip because he just has to see how Sherlock responds to it, and he moans-shifts his hips up to meet John's erection, and John rubs himself against the hard ridge in Sherlock's jeans. He sighs when John sweeps his tongue inside, fingers digging in harder into John's shoulder. It hurts. Had this been his fantasy? He can't remember. It's dark, and he can't see Sherlock's expression properly, but he can feel his warm, willing mouth and the after taste of cigarettes and the way Sherlock's hip shift restlessly against his-

The warmth is suddenly gone when Sherlock abruptly pushes him back, roughly. "Stop," he chokes out. "Stop, stop."

John feels weirdly off balance. He can hear Sherlock's ragged breathing. "No," he says, more to himself than to John. "Not anymore. Not this. You can't. I- I don't."

"Sherlock, it's okay," John says quickly, moving away, unease settling on top of skin like sticky sweat. "I'm sorry. I'm sorry, we don't have to."

"Fuck, I've ruined this again," he seethes, and runs his hand frantically through his hair.

"Stop it," John says firmly, grabbing his hand. Sherlock starts. "You haven't ruined anything. What are you talking about?"

"Is this what you want?" he asks, his voice soft. "This is what you want, isn't it?"

"No," John says slowly, choosing his words. He feels terrified. What has he done? "I- I shouldn't have done that. I'm sorry."

"Don't kiss me again," he replies, his voice shaking. "I can't. I won't do this, John. I can't. I told you. I told you I'm not- I'm not good at this, and I don't intend to be. I can't be what you want. I'm not capable of it."

"You don't have to be anything," John says hurriedly, reaching forward to hold Sherlock's wrists but thinking better of it. "I wasn't thinking. I'm sorry. That was unfair to you, and I'm definitely not trying it again."

Sherlock looks conflicted, miserable. "This is what I do, John. I disappoint people. You know who I am, you've seen what I do. You shouldn't be expecting anything better."

"Someone," John says evenly, holding Sherlock's gaze. "Someone did terrible things to you, and one day, I'm going to murder them. Until then, I want you to know that this? he gestures to the space between them, "doesn't have to amount to anything, if you don't want it. We can be whatever you want. Friends, acquaintances, I don't care. I just want to be with you, in any way you'll let me."

Sherlock looks unsure. "We can't do this again. You can't expect it."
"I'm not expecting anything," he says, although it hurts somewhere in the vicinity of his chest while saying it. He has to force the words out. "Whatever you want. I'm serious."

He's fucked it up. He's fucked it up horribly.

"I want to see you again," Sherlock says in a small voice. He sounds so young, John wants to wrap him in his arms, but he can tell that would be an unwelcome gesture.

"So do I."

John wonders how difficult it is going to be, not getting to kiss Sherlock ever again. He shouldn't have thought it was possible, anyway. It's alright though, the need isn't as intense as before now that he knows Sherlock doesn't want to do anything of the kind. He still wants, though. The want is hard to overcome.

"Can we just-" Sherlock waves his hands about vaguely. "Forget about this?"

"Consider it forgotten," John says, smiling.

"You still want to- you still want to see me, even though I don't-"

"You really don't have to do anything to make me stay, Sherlock. Except just be yourself."

The look on Sherlock's face is hard to read; his eyes look impossibly sad, but his lips twitch. He looks down at his hands, and nods slowly, as if resigning himself to something.

Suddenly, Sherlock's phone rings, ruining the moment. Sherlock rolls his eyes, digging his fingers into his pocket to extract his phone. "Lestrade," he whispers furiously. He picks it up, barks out a rough "What?"

John watches as his expression changes from impatience to interest to delight. "I'll give it a look, he finally says. Then he scowls. "No, I'm not high. Here, talk to John-"

"What?" John can barely do anything before Sherlock shoves his phone next to John's ear. "You're being-" he starts, but the person on the phone is saying, "Who's John?" in an equally angry manner, so John says, "I am," instead.

"Why am I talking to you?" Lestrade asks.

"Presumably to assure you that Sherlock isn't high," John guesses. Sherlock sends him a thumbs up, accompanied by a wide smile.

"Well, I don't know who you are," the man said petulantly. "So I can't trust you. Never mind, I'll know when I see him. Tell him I'm expecting him, and if he's off his rocker again, I'm arresting him."

He hangs up. John, suddenly feeling bewildered and unsure, gives the mobile back to Sherlock.

"I'm confused," he admits.

"You should put that on a T-shirt," Sherlock suggests brightly, pocketing his phone. He walks towards the exit. "You coming?"

"Where- where exactly are we going?" John asks, knowing full well he won't get a proper answer.

"You'll see," Sherlock says, disappearing down the staircase.
"I have an assignment due tomorrow," John objects weakly. Everything moves so fast with Sherlock, it's like he barely has any time to think.

Suddenly Sherlock stops, and turns around. He's on a lower step, so their heights even out. They're very close. John would have stumbled and ended up making the second mistake of the night.

"I am taking a...calculated risk," Sherlock tells him, very seriously. His voice is slightly shaking, either from exhilaration or nervousness.

"Okay?" John replies.

"You're a part of the risk," he continues. "I'm risking you."

"Why am I being risked?"

Sherlock leans forward, and very gently, kisses him below his ear. He can smell Sherlock's hair, the dull sugary scent of suppressants, and another spicy, intoxicating scent that hangs about him that has nothing to do with gender. He wants to close his eyes. "I have absolutely no idea," Sherlock says, sounding incredulous, and then, turning around, he's off like a bullet.

John, still off balance from the press of Sherlock's lips, follows.

Chapter End Notes

apparently I'm that asshole who updates every six months. Sorry, guys! Hope the John POV helped.
Chapter Summary

Sherlock looks down at his hands. They’re covered in old leather gloves, the skin showing at the knuckles, frayed around the edges. They used to be Victor’s. Sherlock doesn’t quite know why he can’t bear to get rid of them. Perhaps it's a reminder. Don’t get attached.

Chapter Notes

TW: mentions of rape, sexual assault.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

When I was one-and-twenty

I heard him say again,

“The heart out of the bosom

Was never given in vain;

'Tis paid with sighs a plenty

And sold for endless rue.”

And I am two-and-twenty,

And oh, ’tis true, ’tis true.

- AE Housman

By the time he’s outside on the pavement, waiting for a cab, it starts raining. Hardly surprising. It’s a bare drizzle. Sherlock doesn’t like rain, at all. There are too many memories. He hates being caught in it without an umbrella, with nothing to shield himself from the cold. It’s hardly something one can avoid in London, but on the days it rains too hard Sherlock goes back home, unable to tear himself
away from the window, watching the rain fall and fall, hitting the glass with the sound of stuttering bullets. But he doesn’t go outside.

He tries to ignore it, now. Even when the water hits his face. He can feel it collecting on his shoulders, in his hair. Soon he’ll be uncomfortably damp. He feels John stand next to him, unexpectedly warm. His cheeks are flushed, and he’s decidedly not looking at Sherlock. In spite of himself, Sherlock smirks.

“I’m calling us a cab,” he says.

“Oh, were you waiting for me? That’s polite.” His sarcastic humour is back, and when he looks up at Sherlock, it’s like he’s saying I get it. I won’t mention it, if you don’t want me to. The problem, Sherlock thinks, when getting back from the high, is all this tedious feeling. This one, this exact one that’s rising in him like a tidal wave, threatening to render him absolutely useless.

He clears his throat, looks away, lifts his arm for a cab. “I’m always polite.”

***

“Am I allowed to be here?” John asks. Tedious.

“How does it matter?” Sherlock replies haughtily. “Lestrade needs my help. It’s not as though he’s got a choice.”

Sherlock does notice the hostile glances turned his way. He’s come here twice before, both times he was high off his arse on cocaine, and Lestrade had locked him in his office and told him that this was becoming a ridiculous habit and if he won’t stop, he’ll call his brother.

“My brother,” Sherlock had gasped, hand clutched to his chest in mock shock. “That’s a low blow, Gavin, even for you.”

“My name’s Greg- which you know very well- and this is for your own good.”

He admits reluctantly that Lestrade seems to be the few people on the planet who have a genuine concern for him. And Sherlock would prefer to keep him, the cases, along with the drugs, are the only things that keep off the dull edge of boredom.

“So, care to explain what we’re doing here? You fell asleep in the cab.”

“I wasn’t asleep,” Sherlock defends, as they step into an elevator. “And I told you. Lestrade needs my help.”

“With a case?” John asks.

“With a case.”

John raises his eyebrows: impressed. He whistles softly, and it’s fascinating. John reacts to him in strange, unfamiliar ways and Sherlock feels...different. Like there’s something bright and flaming in his chest; but in a good way. It’s unfair that Sherlock can’t be normal and allow inevitability to take its course; if he did nothing to stop it; John could have had him against any surface by now. He looks down at his feet, swallows. He has no one to blame but himself, really.

The lift pings open. Sherlock is glad for something to distract him.

“Sherlock,” Lestrade is standing outside his office, and looks relieved to see him. His hair is messy,
he’s been up for the past two nights; his wife’s moved out, again. Clearly.

“Lestrade,” Sherlock nods at him. Sally, leaning against the wall next to him, looks suitably annoyed. Excellent.

“Who’s this?” she asks, gesturing towards John. She appraises him, quickly, one swift flick of her eyes. She finds John attractive, reluctantly so, but her inherent distrust of anyone Sherlock would be associated with prevents her from being nice.

“Sherlock, you know you’re not allowed-“ Lestrade starts, but Sherlock quickly cuts him off with a glare.

“John stays or I go,” he replies, firmly. “I need him with me.”

“I swear to God, Sherlock, if you’re high again-“

“Listen, I could go if it’s easier for-“ John starts stepping back, but Sherlock grabs his sleeve. He looks down at him, unsure of what to say except, “Stay.”

There must be something needy in his expression. John nods. “Alright.” Then he turns to Lestrade and holds out his hand. “Hi, might as well introduce myself. John Watson.”

Lestrade looks surprised, as though he were expecting John to be some kind of unsavoury criminal. He shakes John’s hand, looking rather pleased. “Greg Lestrade. This is Sally.”

“No thanks,” is her way of greeting John. She doesn’t hold out her and, instead choosing to glare at Sherlock. Sherlock raises an eyebrow, silently challenging her to say anything. There’s a constant tug of war between the both of them. Sherlock doesn’t hate her, not really, he actually respects her, but it’s not as though he’s going to let her know that.

“While I’m interested to know about this,” Lestrade suddenly says, gesturing to the space between Sherlock and John with his coffee mug. Sherlock scowls at him. “We do have an urgent case to discuss.” He opens the door for them. “Get in.”

John follows Sally inside, but before Sherlock can walk in, Greg grabs his elbow, preventing him.

“Les-“

“He’s not- you’re not- this is nothing I should be worried about, right?” His brown eyes search Sherlock’s face, looking for signs of distress, bruises, something that would perhaps tell him that Sherlock was being abused, or taken advantage of. It’s not entirely surprising. Lestrade knows about Sherlock’s lifestyle.

“You should be worried about your receding hairline,” Sherlock rejoins smoothly.

“Sherlock, I’m serious.”

He rolls his eyes. “No, Lestrade, he’s not my pimp, or my drug dealer-, and I’m completely sober. Can we get started? I believe there’s a serial rapist at large.”

“Yeah, alright. Just-” He looks at him meaningfully. “You haven’t been replying to my calls for a while, and now you come here out of the blue with some alpha who looks suspiciously like your boyfriend-“

“What the hell is wrong with you,” Sherlock whispers furiously. “Boyfriend, how old are you,
Lestrade? Twelve? Why are you so interested to know about my sex life?"

“God knows I’d rather not hear a word of your sex life,” Lestrade bites out. “I’m just worried about you, Sherlock, is that so difficult to understand?”

Sherlock sighs. “You needn’t be. Now can you let me go?”

“Just be careful,” he finally requests.

“Always am,” Sherlock lies, and twists out of Lestrade’s grasp, entering the office. He hears the door shut behind him as Lestrade walks in last.

John stands next to Sally, looking at the shiny photographs spread out on his desk. He looks noticeably disgusted. Sally seems to have been discussing the case with him. Interesting.

“...so it’s happened six times, and he goes after a certain kind of victim- most of them are omegas, there are two female betas. But they all look a certain way, if you’ll notice.”

Sherlock knows the details of the case well enough. Lestrade had called him about it two weeks ago, but he hadn’t been in a state to think of anything. He can barely remember whether it was sex or drugs, or both. Lestrade hadn’t called him after that. The stab of regret is uncomfortable, especially with the photographs of the mutilated bodies staring up at him.

He reaches for one. Slender, dark haired, delicately built. Like a bird. There’s gash across her throat, her skirt hitched up around her waist, blood on the inside of her thighs.

The other pictures are much the same, a dark haired boy, he barely looks sixteen, dark hair plastered against his forehead with what looks like blood.

"Is he-"

"A minor. Went to Harrow, was here holiday, to see his grandparents.” Sally's voice is dangerously low.

Sherlock feels bile rise up in his throat. It’s odd, having such a visceral reaction to crime. They all have similar features, pale, dark haired, skinny-

“They look a bit like Sherlock,” Lestrade comments.

“Clearly,” Sherlock puts them away. “I’ll need a list of locations on where the rapes took place, where the victims lived- everything you’ve got, show me.”

***

He figures out within the next hour where the rapist should strike next. He’s not even clever, this man, his means of going about it are as dull as ditch water. From the finger prints and the marks on the victim’s body he deduces how tall he would be, his shoe size, and he has a rough idea of what he should look like.

He knows, in all probability, he should be looking for his next victim tonight.
When he reaches forward for a pen, his hand comes into contact with a mug instead. It’s still hot. He draws his fingers back, blinking at the steaming cup of tea. He looks up to find John sitting a bit further away from him, legs up on the table, texting.

“You got me tea?” Sherlock asks, staring at him.

John’s head flicks up suddenly, eyes wide in expectation. “Welcome back,” he smiles. “And, yeah, figured you might need it at some point of time.”

“You were...quiet,” Sherlock observes, curling his hand around the cup, bringing it to his lips. Probably Molly’s making, she makes decent enough tea.

“Yeah, well-” John scoots over on his chair, turning around to face him. “I actually did try talking to you. You didn’t reply.”

Sherlock blinks. Stares. “And that didn’t put you off?”

“No, not really,” John replies, shrugging. “You were busy.”

“I-” Sherlock stares down at his hands, unable to think of anything to say. Was John really here, the entire time- watching him? Staying when Sherlock barely noticed his presence? He swallows, thinking of the implications, what it makes him feel. When he looks back at John, there’s a soft smile on his face.

“I liked watching you. You were doing something important. Helping people.”

“I don’t,” Sherlock bristles, ready to give him his usual reply. “I’m not doing it to help people. It just- it keeps the boredom away. It serves my purposes.”

John’s expression is disbelieving. “I saw your face when you looked at those photographs. It made you upset. Angry, even.” The pile of photographs just sits a few inches away, turned over so the white sheen stares up at them, vaguely threatening. Sherlock clears his throat loudly.

“Is that what it makes you feel? Angry?”

John looks surprised at being asked his opinion. He follows Sherlock’s gaze until it falls on the evidence. “Yeah,” he finally says. “No one should- they were innocent people, no one deserves that. No one has the right to do that in the first place.”

“Two of the victims were in heat,” Sherlock challenges, looking John in the eyes.

“How the fuck does that even matter,” He rolls his eyes. “It’s still rape.”

Sherlock holds his gaze for a few more seconds, wondering. He has so many questions, and it’s so unfair, that he can’t ask them. His eyes flick over the stubborn set of John’s mouth, the clenched fingers. "You're not- you're different. I don't know why, or how. You just are.” Sherlock finds it difficult to hide the frustration in his voice. John looks uncomprehendingly at him, his lips parting slightly. Sherlock wants to lean over and press his mouth against the base of his throat, scent him, god, he makes this so difficult.

“You sound annoyed," he surmises. "Does it annoy you, me being different?"

"I don't know," Sherlock mutters, turning away from him, staring at the apparatus on the table.

He feels John's hand come to rest at the back of his neck. It's warm, and utterly soothing, and for a few scary seconds Sherlock can't think of anything. It's almost as though- this touch is different. Makes his heart beat in six different ways. Sherlock wants nothing more than to melt into the touch, take the comfort that is offered from an Alpha. Is it that bad, to want it?"
"Hey, we don't have to talk about this now. Are you done here?" John's voice is soft.

"Yes," Sherlock replies hurriedly. "I'm done. I think- I know where he'll strike next."

John shifts closer. This makes Sherlock decidedly upset. If John wants Sherlock to concentrate on the case, is this really the way to go about it?

"How can you tell?"

Sherlock glances at him, feeling nervous, all of a sudden. "You want to know?"

"Well, I asked."

When he explains it all to John, John’s eyes are wide and his mouth is slightly open. “You got all that...from just the photographs?"

Sherlock frowns at him. “Well, Lestrade had finger prints, and a semen sample. And we had a scrap of clothing. This one-” he nudges at the piece of leather with a latex covered finger. “This is from his boot. It’s not that hard.”

“I-” John shakes his head, seemingly incapable of speech. “That...brilliant. I’ve told you this before, haven’t I?"

Sherlock feels his lip twitch, that same flaming feeling in his chest. “Feel free to continue,” he teases, and watches with satisfaction as John blushes.

“You figured out something an entire police force couldn’t,” John continues.

“That’s unfair,” Sherlock says mildly, taking off the gloves and writing an address on a scrap of paper. He writes a second one on another, stuffs that in his pocket. “Considering that Scotland Yard is full of obnoxious dullards who can’t tell left from right. It’s not much of a leap.”

John gets up from his stool, coming to stand next to him, glancing at the address. “I know that place. Is that where you think-"

“Perhaps,” Sherlock answers, non committal. Wouldn’t do to tell John quite yet. “Come on, we have to tell Lestrade.”

***

“Are you sure?” Lestrade looks up from the address to him. Sally looks infuriated.

“Freak got all that from barely nothing- how the fuck can he be sure?”

“I’m sure,” Sherlock promises. “It’s a stake out. Go do your job, for once, Lestrade. I’m going home.”

“Home?” both John and Lestrade repeat incredulously, looking at him.

Sherlock glances between the two of them, heaves an impatient breath. “Don’t be absurd,” he tells Lestrade. “You have, from your own words, come to the conclusion that John is my boyfriend. Is it really so unbelievable that I would like to spend a quiet evening home with my boyfriend, rather than
participate in an extremely dangerous stake out- on the lookout for a rapist who enjoys assaulting omegas that look like me? Come now, Lestrade. You can’t be *that* dull.”

He feels John stiffen beside him, his brain probably attempting to work out what Sherlock has just said. Lestrade looks extremely affronted.

“Well, when you put it that way-”

“For God’s sake, Gavin, stop wasting time and go,” he finally barks, and Lestrade mercifully shuts up, folding the paper up and placing it inside his pocket. Sally still looks unconvinced, but moves along when Lestrade pushes her to get going. Sherlock waits until they’re out of sight. He checks his watch. They have roughly an hour to get there. He shuts the door, locks it.

“Boyfriend?” John finally bursts out, turning to look at him expectantly. “What the hell was that?”

“Quiet,” Sherlock says, turning around and placing a finger on John’s lips. John shuts up immediately, eyes going cross eyed in an attempt to look down at Sherlock’s finger. "Sit down," he adds, pushing him down on Lestrade’s chair. He looks extremely upset, especially when the chair swivels around a bit. John must dislike such furniture. Sherlock will keep that in mind.

"Now we wait," he informs John, pulling the blinds of the window. John watches in astonishment as Sherlock picks the lock on Lestrade’s drawer and extracts a pair of handcuffs. He stuffs them into his pocket. He pats his chest just to make sure the gun is still there.

“For-”

“Shh.”

He pours them both a coffee from Lestrade’s thermos, which lay abandoned on his desk. He shoves it into John’s hands.

“Sherlock- *what-*”

“Drink,” he commands, and raises the scalding liquid to his own lips. Disgusting, he abhors coffee. Never going to have it again.

John looks over at him from the rim of his mug, regarding him coolly. "You're confusing me."

"I do that quite a lot, though, don’t I?" Sherlock replies pleasantly.

John's tongue is his cheek as his mouth curves into the barest hint of a smirk. "You seem to enjoy it, keeping me on my feet. Making me ask questions. You must get off on it."

Sherlock cocks his head. "You enjoy it just the same, though, don't you?"

Flirting with John is so easy. He makes it so simple, as though it's the only thing that could possibly be expected of it. It's exasperating, and exciting, and Sherlock does not need the distraction right now.

"Sherlock, what are we doing," John finally asks, around an impatient sigh.

“Waiting for an opportune moment. Which should be about...now.” He puts the mug back on the desk, snatches John’s away from him. Then he grabs John’s wrist, pulling them both out of Lestrade’s office.

“Why aren’t you going with them? Seems like the kind of thing you’d enjoy. The running around
Sherlock wordlessly hands him the slip of paper from his pocket, with the address written on it. John walks beside him, scanning the hastily scrawled words.

“This isn’t- this is different, isn’t it? You told them to go somewhere different.”

“Yes,” Sherlock replies. “Because there’s too many of them and they’re not going to catch him, with all their fumbling around.”

John doesn’t say anything until they’re outside, perhaps trying to make sense of what Sherlock’s told him.

“Hang on—” John holds up a finger, and then roughly brings Sherlock’s arm down before he can flag down a taxi. He looks...angry. “You’re not seriously telling me you’re going to catch this rapist by yourself, are you?”

“Be quiet,” Sherlock whispers, and clamps a hand over John’s mouth. “We’re not out of earshot yet.”

John wrenches Sherlock’s hand away. He’s about to say something, but remembering what Sherlock told him about someone listening, instead grips Sherlock around the wrist and drags him away from the building, pushing him against a wall in the alley next to it. It nearly knocks the air out of him.

“You’re being ridiculous,” he says, furiously. “We’re just two people and this isn’t some incompetent robber- it’s a sodding rapist who has a penchant for victims who look an awful lot like you!”

Sherlock sighs, rolling his eyes. This is tedious. While John’s concern for him is flattering, it’s acting as an impediment at this moment and therefore, undesirable.

“You’re worried about me,” he deduces.

“Well, yeah,” John replies, throwing out his arms. “A police force is one thing, two unarmed blokes is another.”

“You have to trust me,” Sherlock responds urgently. “This is the most expedient way of doing it. There’s a reason I’m faster and better at this, John. Because I work alone, and I get it done. You have to trust me. And I’m not unarmed. I have you. Now will you come with me? Because if you don’t, I’ll go alone.”

John looks at him incredulously, and then actually laughs. It’s a short huff; not bitter or sarcastic, rather...indulgent. And surprised, at himself. He’s obviously finding himself agreeing to it, albeit for the only reason that if he doesn’t, Sherlock will go off on his dangerous mission alone. Sherlock finds his gut warming up at the thought, that John would willingly walk into a dangerous situation, (unarmed) because he thinks Sherlock would need the protection.

God, he wants to kiss him again.


“And you won’t be unarmed either,” Sherlock adds, reaching inside for the gun. John’s eyes widen.

“What the hell,” he whispers. “Did you steal this?” Steal, that would require actual effort. Not his fault the officers at NSY have the attention span of a two year old.
“Yes. From an off duty officer, don’t worry. Now put it in your jacket, quickly. You know how to shoot, don’t you?”

“Couldn’t figure that out yourself?” John challenges, stuffing the gun inside.

Sherlock smirks, “You were around sixteen, maybe eighteen. Before you went to university, at any rate. You nicked your father’s army issue, taught yourself in the woods. Beer cans?”

“Coke bottles,” John corrects, eyes sparkling. “Come on.”

They take a cab, and Sherlock tries to bury the thoughts running around in his head that aren’t related to the case.

“So do you just plan to, what, know exactly where he’ll be and clock him?”

“More or less,” Sherlock assents. “There will be some waiting involved. I know when I’ll see him.”

“You better not- just don’t put yourself in danger unnecessarily,” John trails off, looking out the window.

“You’re worried about that. You’re worried I’ll do something stupid, without thinking.” Sherlock looks down at his hands. They’re covered in old leather gloves, the skin showing at the knuckles, frayed around the edges. They used to be Victor’s. Sherlock doesn’t quite know why he can’t bear to get rid of them. Perhaps it’s a reminder. Don’t get attached.

“You say that like it’s surprising,” John murmurs. “Is it that unlikely, that I’ll worry about you?. I can already see it happening in my head. You have the self preservation skills of a goat.”

The analogy teases a laugh out of Sherlock. “I’m sure even a goat would protect itself, if it thought it was in real danger.”

“Not until the very last moment,” John points out. “Just- just don’t leave me in the dark, okay? I’m here. I have a -” he suddenly remembers the taxi driver- “I’m not unarmed. I don’t mind being your security, just remember I’m here.’

“My security?” Sherlock can feels a grin teasing at his mouth. “My...security.” Is that how John sees himself? As a guard? It should irk him- this implication that Sherlock needs protecting. But it doesn’t. It’s...flattering.

“Yeah, well, you can’t shoot, can you?” John smiles crookedly at him. It’s always flirtatious, that smile. Always makes Sherlock feel like he’s being chatted up, even when John isn’t trying.

Sherlock can’t help his cheeks from heating. His entire face feels flushed. He wants desperately to reach over, and-

“We’re here, gents,” the cab pulls to a halt, shaking him out of it.

The case. There’s a case. Stupid.

He steps out of the cab, hearing John grumbling behind him about having to pay.

The cab speeds away and John comes to stand next to him, and they silently go inside the seedy pub.
Sherlock usually avoids places like this if he can help it, although they are statistically better places to pull. How dull, how predictable of the rapist to weed for victims here. Sherlock has little respect for people who take sex by force, he has had plenty of experience with alphas thinking their entitlement was enough to get them anything they wanted. That, coupled with this man’s sheer unoriginality, makes Sherlock rather bored. Murder is always more preferable. It’s the thought of that omega girl, lifeless blue eyes, mouth lying slack, dark hair around her like a halo that reminds him why he’s here in the first place. It wouldn’t do to tell Lestrade that, though.

“Sit next to the window, over there,” Sherlock pushes John forward with a hand on the small of his back, leading them to the tiny booth in the corner. It gives them a good view of the entire pub. He slides in, taking off his sweatshirt. He can feel his hair stand up on the end due to the friction. He tries to pat it down.

“Can’t help thinking of Sally and Lestrade at another pub, on their fake stake out,” John mutters, edge of a smile on his lips, as he shrugs out of his coat. He’s wearing a dark blue button down open at the collar. Sherlock clears his throat, looking away from him and at the denizens of the pub instead.

“They’re not too far,” he reassures him. “I am not unaware of the advantages of having fully trained personnel at hand.”

The pub has plenty of slimy alpha males looking to get a leg over. But none of them are who they’re looking for. Sherlock checks his watch. Half past seven. Too early yet.

“You can order something, if you like. We’ll be here for a while.” Sherlock takes out a cigarette from his pocket and lights it, welcoming the sudden rush of nicotine.

There’s already a cloud of smoke hanging over the pub, he doesn’t see how one would hurt.

John looks at the fag disapprovingly. Sherlock raises an eyebrow. “Would you rather I shoot up?”

“That’s unfair,” John says accusingly, getting up. “I’m getting us some beer.”

“That’s unfair,” John says accusingly, getting up. “I’m getting us some beer.”

“None for me, no alcohol during a case.”

“Very professional of you,” John smiles, and goes towards the counter. Sherlock stays, smoking his cigarette. He brings his wrist to his mouth. He can feel the honey-rosewater scent beginning to waft around the edges of the dull sugary fragrance of suppressants. It would smell different to other alphas or betas, of course. He doesn’t reach for the extra strip he keeps in his wallet. In the next hour, he should smell entirely like an omega. He flicks a tongue out to lick experimentally at his pulse. Hmm. He can taste it on himself. He always tastes different when he’s not on suppressants. He wonders if John can tell. Probably.

He takes out his phone and puts John on speed dial, and stuffs it back in his pocket. John comes back with a lager. Predictable.

“So,” he says, slipping in next to him. “How do you tell a rapist from anyone else? Because everyone here looks like a potential suspect.”

“Usually,” Sherlock says, around an exhale. “It’s the ones you don’t expect. Most of them are creeps, but no one has the propensity for rape. Minimal sexual assault, yes. That one, for example. I would stay clear of him.” Sherlock points to an overweight alpha male, downing his whisky like water. A woman sits next to him, clearly uncomfortable. He keeps trying to chat her up, touching her
thighs every thirty seconds.

“Why isn’t she-”

She finally gets up, throws her drink in his face and walks out. Someone whistles.

“He’d have followed her. But he’s too drunk, look at him- he can barely get his words out.”

While John is looking at the man, trying to see what Sherlock sees, Sherlock tests his theory by slipping two fingers into his mouth and then wiping them at the back of his neck. Moisture on the glands should get them to release more of the scent.

As if on cue, Sherlock can see John’s nostrils flare. He looks at him, just for a second; a slightly confused expression on his face. He turns away, blinking rapidly.

“So- uh. Huh.” He drinks almost half his lager. Sherlock hides his smirk behind his cigarette.

They don’t talk much for the next hour, mainly because Sherlock snaps at him twice to keep quiet. Soon, Sherlock spots him. He fits the bill—tall, cropped dark hair, muscular body. There’s a scar under his ear. Even from here Sherlock can tell it’s from a sharp fingernail. He watches him order a beer, and instead of sitting on the stool, he leans against the counter and surveys the room.

“John,” he says smoothly. “Get me a beer, would you?”

“Didn’t you say no alcohol?”

“I changed my mind. Get me a beer, please.” He schools his expression into a comical, exaggerated mockery of a kicked puppy face.

John rolls his eyes, but predictably, leaves to get him his beer.

There’s already a line near the counter. John should be there for at least seven minutes. Sherlock stubs the cigarette in the ash tray, grabs his jacket, and then, snatching a tissue from the stand on the table, dips it into John’s bottle. He dabs it around his neck. He messes up his hair as well. He checks his reflection. He looks drunk, he smells like an omega, and he bites his lip hard, to get some colour back into the pale flesh.

John is at the other end, he shouldn’t be able to see him. Sherlock walks up to the front, just barely giving his walk the effect of a limp; tipsy, not dead drunk yet. Enough to want another drink.

When he comes up next to the man, Sherlock doesn’t look at him. He waits. He can feel the heat of his gaze, uncomfortable, unsettling, and rather threatening. He can feel it linger on certain parts of his body.

“Hello,” he says pleasantly. Sherlock turns around, his eyebrows barely raised, a hint of surprise.

“Hello,” he replies. Smiles. It’s a lazy smile. The smile of lowered inhibitions.

“Can I get you a drink?”

“Oh yes, please,” he drawls.

He pretends to be looking somewhere else when the drink slides up next to him. He discreetly takes a sniff, pretends to slip. Lets some of it coat his lips. He licks it up, all the while looking into the man’s eyes. They’re dark, and now fixed at his neck. He can smell it, now. So can Sherlock.
“I do have to get home, though,” he says, looking at his watch. “I’ve got an assignment to finish.”

“You’re a university student, then? Where do you study?” The set of his jaw is hard, his eyes already burning a hole into Sherlock’s. There’s a smile on his lips, though, but it’s a cold one. The smile of a python before it devours you whole. It barely reaches his eyes.

“UCL. Chemistry. Nice meeting you, and thanks for the drink. Bye,” Sherlock shrugs into jacket, and makes to leave. He can feel the rush of breath, the anger in the man’s posture. He’s bought him a drink and now Sherlock’s leaving? Inconceivable.

“Let me get you a cab,” the man says, fingers clasping around Sherlock’s wrist. It makes disgust coil in his stomach. He’s smiling at him- a facial expression designed to put him at ease but instead makes him want to throw up all over his feet.

The man doesn’t want someone willing to spread their legs. He wants someone to struggle against him, to fight. Sherlock looks at the scratch marks all over his neck, and then thinks of the ones between that girls’ legs, bleeding still, when they found her. He thinks of this cretin clawing at her legs until they part, sinking into her while she screams. And then murdering her so his crime dies along with her.

“I think I’ll go on my own,” he says, and wrenches free of his grasp. He can’t see John. Ignoring it, he makes his way through the pub and finally, outside. He’s being followed, of course. Sherlock stuffs his hands into his pockets, stands at the curb as though he’s waiting for a cab.

“You shouldn’t go home on your own, in this state,” the voice comes from behind him. Sherlock turns around and stares into a pair of dark grey eyes. He’s never noticed them properly before. He wonders if there’s something inside of him that warns his victims. Wonders when exactly they thought of running. How far they got.

A hand closes around his bicep. Sherlock takes a step back. He moves forward. “Let’s take a walk,” the man whispers into his ear. Sherlock swallows, letting the man’s hand slip down his arm, caress his bare skin.

He lets the fear show on his face; widened eyes, the biting of his lip; it predictably draws him. God, this was so easy. He’s not even intelligent, this man. He doesn’t even rape because no one is willing; he rapes because he wants to rape. It’s disgusting, and reckless, and Sherlock usually has grudging admiration for criminals, but not him. He leaves a predictable trail of clues behind him, right down to the pub he’d be at when he scouts for his next victim.

“Where are we going?” he asks softly.

“Why don’t you follow me and we’ll decide as we go along.”

They start walking. The man should be thinking that his drug has begun to take effect by now. Sherlock stumbles, once or twice. He feels an arm wrap around his waist, dragging him along. They don’t even go too far from the bar when he’s suddenly pushed up against a wall. There are rubbish bins lined up against the brickwork, a car that’s almost in ruins hides them from view.

“You’re gorgeous,” he says, already working at his belt. Sherlock lets his expression grow slack, as if he’s barely aware of what’s happening. He slips his other hand into his back pocket. Dials 9.

“Who-”

“You think I’m fucking stupid, you cunt,” there’s a swift hand at his throat. “You think I didn’t fucking notice you staring at me. Either you want me to fuck you or you’re with the police. Either
way, I’m going to kill you.”

“I have no clue- what are you talking about,” he murmurs, sliding down.

The man picks him back up, holds him up more firmly there. There’s hot breath in his face. He can feel rough hands around the skin at his waist. “You think I’m going to have you and then kill you? Fucking whore. I’ll kill you first.”

The hands at his throat start squeezing. Sherlock hadn’t considered this. He had thought the man would try to have sex with him, and in the ensuing struggle, Sherlock would use the time on his hands until John came to help. Well then, the rouse will have to get over, then. He reaches back and knees the man in the crotch. He lets go, with a cry of pain, and Sherlock takes the opportunity to run.

Of course, this is what the man had been waiting for. The street they’re on is empty; taking him somewhere crowded would just ruin his entire plan. He has to take him somewhere the man thinks he’ll have a chance.

He starts to take a turn into a darkened backstreet, outside what looks like an abandoned meat shop. But before he can get any further, the man fucking tackles him; throwing himself on top of his body and bringing him to the ground. Sherlock feels his ankle shatter; shit, that hurt. He considers screaming; but that would bring more people and he needs then man to stay here until more help arrives. So he struggles.

He rams his elbow into the man’s eye, which makes him snarl in fury and land a punch on his mouth. Sherlock feels the blood, warm and wet and quite a bit of it- he punches him again, this time on the other side. Sherlock’s vision darkens, spots dancing in front of his eyes. There’s a third punch, right on his nose. He can feel the sickening crunch of bone, blood spilling out. He reaches out blindly, hands clawed to swipe at the man’s face; draw blood- he manages a bit before the man grabs his wrists and pushes them up and against his chest. He’s straddling his hips now; his expression difficult to read in the dark. Sherlock can see the white of his teeth. His smile is a snarl.

“You fucking think you’re so smart- just an omega- whore- in the end-” he twists his wrists together, Sherlock can feel his bones grinding. Sherlock tries dislodging him from his hips but he’s heavy- and strong. He can feel his erection against his thigh. "Going to murder you- fuck your corpse-"

The man brings his hands to his throat again- squeezing. Sherlock’s mouth lolls open in an attempt to drag in more air.

Shit.

The grip is gone when a gun comes out of nowhere and whacks the man on the side of his head. Sherlock shudders, take a great breath of air as he rolls over, coughing. He spits out some blood, and when he wipes a trembling hand over his mouth it comes back red and shiny.

“You fucking idiot,” he can hear John seethe behind him, which is probably meant for him. He turns back, squinting, seeing John send him a quick glance, full of rage, before taking the opportunity and whacking the man on his head again. The rapist falls over, hands shielding his face, spluttering. "What the hell-"

Sherlock hurriedly moves out of the way, scrambling to the wall. "Knock him out," he instructs. "Knock him out before-"

John hastily aims his gun at the man’s head while he’s still on the ground, hand held to his temple. There’s a smudge of blood there. His eyes look dazed.
“Don’t,” John says softly, when he tries to stand up. “Don’t you fucking dare, you piece of shit.”

John’s blue eyes are burning. Sherlock has never seen him like this before. That testosterone match with Sebastian, this morning- god, it seems like years ago- that was nothing, compared to this John. It’s like holding a matchstick next to a forest fire.

John brings the gun to the man’s mouth. Suddenly Sherlock is worried that he’s actually going to shoot.

“John, don’t-” he begins.

The man tries to get up, make a swipe for John’s midsection, but John brings a hand to the back of his head and rears him back roughly. He swallows hard, eyes still unfocused, his cheeks flushed. He shoves the gun harder into the man’s mouth.

“John-” Sherlock says again. Just as quickly, John rears the gun back and hits him on his temple again. This time the man’s eyes roll back in his head and he falls to the ground in a heap.

John is panting. Sherlock stares as he slips the gun into the waistband of his jeans. His hair is dishevelled, cheeks flushed from the fight. Sherlock takes a deep breath, and tries to get up, but it proves too much for him and he stumbles. John’s attention is immediately dragged from the body on the ground and he kneels next to Sherlock, cupping his face, holding him up against the light.

“What is it? Are you alright? Hey, look at me. You okay?”

“Yes,” Sherlock breathes out. His throat feels raw and chafed. He can feel the bruises around his eyes and his cheeks, and he moves his hand up to rub at the skin. John watches the movement of his hand, swallows.

“Look at your face. What did that sick fuck do?” runs a thumb over Sherlock’s cheekbone. “You look like shit. You idiot. What were you thinking?”

“I-”

John rips a section from his shirt and holds it up against his bloody nose. "Keep it there," he orders, guiding Sherlock’s hand against it. The frayed ends of his shirt hang loosely. Most of John’s face is in shadow, but he can see his eyes. Bright. Worried. For a moment, Sherlock forgets how to breathe.

“You’re an idiot. You could have- god, I don’t even want to think about it. Call Lestrade. Where else are you hurt?”

“Just my face and my leg,” he tells him.

John exhales loudly, looking down at his feet, still holding Sherlock up. He shakes his head. Sherlock can see the ghost of a smile around his lips.

“You’re insane,” he whispers, looking up at him again. "God, you're insane, Sherlock, I fucking lost my shit when I realised you were gone."

"But you came," Sherlock insists. He's smiling, but John probably can't see his mouth.

"Like the fucking cavalry," he agrees.

They meet eyes and Sherlock thinks John is going to kiss him, and do you know what, he’s going to allow it, because he’s honestly never, ever, met someone like John before and is that the adrenaline
talking- shit- he wants to keep him forever, God- would John let him keep him forever?

“Next time,” he pokes a finger into Sherlock’s chest. “Next time you tell me what the fucking plan is.”

“I’ll tell you what the plan is,” Sherlock agrees quietly. Then he reaches into his pocket and hands John a pair of handcuffs he’d nicked from Lestrade’s office. “Cuff him. I’ll call Lestrade.”

“Can you stand on your own?”

Sherlock places a hand against the uneven brickwork and shifts the pressure to his other leg. “I’ll manage.”

John lets go of him slowly, watching Sherlock’s face for any signs of discomfort. When he’s not holding him anywhere, he waits as though he expects Sherlock to drop down right there.

“John I’m fine. Cuff him before he wakes up.” He leans heavily against the wall, obediently holding up John's ripped shirt to his face. He doesn't know if it's helping.

“Fine. You’re fine. Your face looks like a slab of meat,” he grumbles, but still bends down to the body, cuffing him almost violently.

“Should just shoot him. Would be doing a public service,” he continues muttering, propping his body up against a rubbish bin. His head lolls to the side.

“Lestrade’s on his way,” Sherlock says, leaning heavily against the wall and sending him the text. He can only imagine Lestrade’s expression. Hilarious.

“I hope he arrests you,” John says darkly, standing up. There’s a smudge of blood under his eye. Sherlock can’t help reaching forward shakily and wiping it off. It doesn’t go away entirely; there’s a pinkish stain on the skin, around the small cut.

John is very still. “I don’t fancy you dying so soon,” he says softly. He stands closer to him, holding him by the hips, supporting his weight. He notices Sherlock’s undone belt and there’s a flash of something dark and ugly in his eyes. Sherlock lets him do it up again.

“Don’t be ridiculous.” Sherlock hand slides down to cup the side of his neck. The skin is warm, he can feel John’s pulse. It jumps. He shouldn’t be doing this. John’s hand closes over his, and Sherlock feels his heart drop down to his feet. He’s never felt like this before, not with anyone, this need to put John in a box and protect him from everything, or the need to climb into him and never come out.

Police sirens make them jump apart. Sherlock swallows, clears his throat loudly. “Oh, look, it’s the police,” he says lamely.

“To arrest you, I hope,” John repeats. There’s still a flush down his throat as he pulls Sherlock away from the wall, shifting them so Sherlock can rest his weight on him.

“Lestrade needs me too much to do that,” Sherlock reminds him.

Chapter End Notes

Coming up next: slow burn? what slow burn?
"I probably would have shot him, if he'd done anything to you. I was pretty close to it. I would have. I almost did. I didn't care if I'd get arrested. I just wanted him dead."

My nerves are turned on. I hear them like musical instruments. Where there was silence the drums, the strings are incurably playing. You did this. Pure genius at work. Darling, the composer has stepped Into fire.

Anne Sexton, *The Kiss*

Lestrade is still shouting at him, even when the rapist is safely bound inside the car. Sherlock can hear him swearing. According to his ID, his name is Thomas Michelson.

“...could have gotten yourself killed, or worse- you absolute idiot!” he continues. John sits by his side, but an awful lot of good he's doing, not even contributing to the conversation. Sherlock sends him a pleading glance, but he just pretends to be more interested in his hands, examining his fingernails like Sherlock isn't having the absolute worst time.

“I caught you a serial rapist,” Sherlock defends, turning to Lestrade, gesturing to the car, and the angry criminal inside of it. “Surely you should be grateful.”

“You should be grateful I’m not arresting you for nicking a firearm,” Lestrade counters angrily, bringing his voice down to a furious whisper. “I’ll be expecting it cleaned and returned to my office tomorrow.”

“Yes, sir,” Sherlock grumbles.

“That man is dangerous- and sadistic- look what he did to your bloody face. You think you’re bloody invincible-“
“No one is invincible,” Sherlock says hotly, and Lestrade glares at him.

Sherlock leans his head against the back of the ambulance where he’s seated. He only has half sight, what with the cast covering the majority of his nose. They’d given him some local anaesthesia and set it, but before they could work on his ankle he’d told them to fuck off and leave him alone.

His head hurts, but in a good way. Sherlock feels exhausted, and a little fuzzy, as though he’s floating. Possibly the remnants of adrenaline. He finds himself falling sideways, leaning against John’s side. His head tilts to rest against his. There- that’s good. That’s excellent. The touching. He wants more of it. He wonders if he should ask him. If he likes it as much as he does. If it’s even allowed.

“I’m very tired, Lestrade,” he continues, nuzzling John’s shoulder. He smells divine. “John will take me home now. Goodbye.” Sherlock’s eyes are closed, and John’s scent fills his nostrils. It’s strangely comforting, almost as though he’s known that smell all his life. Achingly familiar, almost.

There are a few seconds of silence during which Sherlock supposes Lestrade is fighting a losing battle against indulgence and fondness. It’s a human deficiency, but it works well in his own favour.

“Come on, I’ll take you both home in a police car, up you get.” The words are said roughly, as though Lestrade is still trying to hold on to some vestiges of authority. Poor Lestrade. He feels him grab his arm, pull him up and away from John’s warmth. John’s fingers brushing at his wrist, and then gone.

He has to hold on to the crutches the paramedics gave him, although it would have been preferable to hold John for support. It’s just a sprain, he should be fine in a week. But they’ve still saddled him with this monstrosity. It reminds Sherlock of the time he had climbed a tree to save the cat and he’d fallen out of it. The cat had fallen down with him, but predictably landed on its feet. He had come tumbling down like a baby bird, incapable of flying. He feels a bit like that now, free falling without end.

“Thanks, Sherlock,” Lestrade finally says, while the three of them walk towards his car. “Stupid method, but still, you caught him.”

“It was the most efficient and expedient method, and yes, I caught him. No need to state the obvious.”

“Just say you’re welcome,” John scolds him, tapping Sherlock’s head lightly.

“You’re welcome,” Sherlock obeys grudgingly.

Lestrade’s greying eyebrows shoot up into his hair. “I’ve never heard you say that.” He blinks at John. “Is this because of you?”

John exhales roughly through his nose, grinning. “You know him. Do you think anyone is capable of making him do anything?” Which, Sherlock admits, with a momentary rush of affection for John, is very true.

“No, I suppose not,” Lestrade assents, and opens the door for the two of them. “Can you help him inside?”

John looks up at him, smirking. "Sure," he says, while his gaze is still locked on Sherlock’s. He can see Lestrade step inside his car out of the corner of his eye. John holds the crutches and gently puts a hand on Sherlock’s skull, helping him to duck inside. "You're under arrest," he says, giggling. It's a stupid joke. But Sherlock finds himself laughing.
"What an appalling sense of humour," he murmurs, sliding into the seat. His eyes feel heavy. John's weight settles against him, and it's lovely, being able to feel someone else's warmth next to you. It's a feeling Sherlock is not familiar with; being so comfortable with another person.

"Baker street, then?" Lestrade catches his eye in the mirror. It's a questioning gaze. It's Lestrade making sure that John is safe, that Sherlock is safe with him- bafflingly enough, Lestrade feels a ridiculous need to ensure Sherlock's well being. Him and Mycroft make a patently overwhelming, annoying team. Mycroft seems to have found the benefit of having a police officer check up on his wayward brother from time to time.

"Yeah," Sherlock replies, and smiles.

Lestrade looks satisfied, a soft expression entering his eyes. The ignition is turned on and he starts to drive.

***

He'd probably fallen asleep because someone is shaking him awake, too soon. He makes a muffled noise of protest and turns over, burying his nose further into leather and- ouch. The pain jerks him awake and eyes still half closed he rubs at his nose, looking behind him, blinking sleepily at John.

"Idiot," John says, with a fond expression. Sherlock's vision is still blurred around the edges. He has to blink a few more times for John to slide into focus.

"Get out, both of you," Lestrade says, too loudly.

"You sound like a trumpet," Sherlock tells him accusingly, reaching for the door handle. His entire body feels stiff. "perhaps that's why you make such an incompetent police officer. Oh sorry, detective inspector, I mean."

Lestrade doesn't bother with a reply. Presumably because he's too idiotic to come up with one. Sherlock opens the door, not prepared for the blast of cold air. John's already outside- when did that happen?- holding out a hand for him. His hair looks like it's glowing from the lamplight. Sherlock would like to stay there for a while, appreciating him. Instead, he shakes himself out of it and attempt to slide out of the car in a non-ridiculous fashion. It is difficult.

"I'm not an invalid," he grumbles, taking his hand anyway. John pulls him out of the car easily, with one hand. Sherlock loses his step and stumbles against him just like he'd wanted to- hmm, John really does smell good. Sweat and pheromones and- hah. He shouldn't be thinking of that at all.

John's arm comes to rest around his waist.

"Don't you want your crutches?" he asks.

"No, they're tedious. Take me upstairs. Goodbye, Lestrade. See you the next time you need help with a case a five year old could solve."

"Sod off," Lestrade finally says. Lovely, how original. Then he speeds away.

Sherlock does actually need help walking, though. John's holding on to his crutches for him. It's a teensy bit self serving, this- he wants to hold on to John rather than those monstrosities of aluminium. They make their way through the door, just in time, actually, to see Ms Hudson putting flowers in the tiny foyer.

She's unmindful of their entrance, humming to herself as she shifts the flowers around in their vase. Peonies, violets, daisies. They're all quite pretty. She only looks up when John kicks the door shut.
behind them with his foot.

"Oh, my," she whispers, fingernails at her mouth. "What in the world happened to your face, young man? And who is this?" she looks disapprovingly at John, her lipsticked mouth turning down at the corners. Presumably she thinks John is the cause of his injuries.

"We caught a serial rapist, Ms. Hudson," he answers brightly, whilst she walks up to him, fluttering her hands about his face, eyes concerned and worried. She has a habit of fussing over him. Sherlock finds it...not altogether unpleasant. Sometimes she's away for days at a time, he has no idea where she goes- has a brief idea, of course, but nothing concrete. Sometimes she makes him tea, sometimes beats him with her broom when he finds him high.

"What an awful business," runs her hand soothingly over his hair. "Very brave of you, dear, but it certainly does sound very stupid. Did you get in a few punches, at least?" She straightens the collar of his shirt.

"John did," He pushes John forward with a hip, holding on to his wrist instead. "This is...erm...my friend, John Watson. John, my landlady, Martha Hudson." John looks at him for a moment, acknowledging the shift in their relationship with a glance and a slight smile.

"Would shake your hand, but they're kind of full at the mo," he answers. He smiles at her, charmingly. It still has a hint of the flirtatious. Ms Hudson giggles, cheeks dusting with pink.

"Well aren't you a sweet young man. Bit of a change, to be honest," she shoots Sherlock a look, which means different from your coked up rich fuckbuddies. Sherlock shrugs.

"Anyhoo," she turns away, pinches John's cheek. "I'm glad you both are alright. Sherlock does have a habit of getting himself in trouble. Shall I take these up, then?" she reaches forward for the crutches.

"That would actually be great, Sherlock's quite heavy," Sherlock manages to look affronted, but he's secretly glad. He feels rather...proud of John. Glad that Ms. Hudson is impressed. She smiles, taking the crutches and leaning them against the staircase.

"I'll send them up tomorrow morning, now you both go up and have a bit of a rest. Goodnight, Sherlock," she leans forward and pecks him on the cheek, and turns around to return to her room.

"Nice landlady," John comments, once the door is shut. He wraps his arm more securely around Sherlock's waist. "Do you think your ankle can handle the weight or should I-

"What, carry me? Don't think that will be necessary." John ducks his head and stifles a smile, perhaps remembering the first night they met. Sherlock knows John must have carried him upstairs. Pity he wasn't awake to experience it.

"Well then. Let's get started."

They make their way up somehow, with Sherlock having to stop a few times because of the pain in his ankle, which flares up suddenly when he misbalances the weight of his body. John grips him tighter then, waiting patiently until he can manage the rest. Maybe he should have waited for the medics to give him a bandage. Well, too late for that.

Once they're inside, John quickly takes him to the threadbare seat by the fire, and gently lowers him down, holding on to his ankle and placing it on the coffee table. Sherlock grunts a bit from the discomfort. John gets down to removing his trainers, and then his socks. Sherlock barely has the energy to stop him. Then John drops into the sofa himself, with a loud exhale of breath.
"I'm exhausted," he murmurs, leaning his head back. Ms Hudson must have lit the fire for them at some point in the evening, because he can hear the cackling of the fire. Sure enough, he sees it, bright and orange and very, very warm. He stretches a bit, sliding down further. John's eyes are closed; Sherlock finds his gaze drawn to the mild rise and fall of his chest, his tanned fingers spread out along his thighs.

"You enjoyed it," Sherlock derives, and John looks up suddenly at him. Sherlock finds his mouth tipping into an all-out grin.

"You're ridiculous," John rejoins, but he's still smiling.

"A ridiculous man who gave you the most fun you've had in weeks." Sherlock tries to cross his legs but the pain from the movement lances up his leg and he feels a tight breath leave his body.

"Shit, I forgot about that," John springs into action, reaching forward and placing a tentative hand on his ankle. "We have to bandage that, and an ice pack, if possible. Do you have any of these things?" He looks rather hopeful.

"I- might," Sherlock inclines his head. "Somewhere in the medicine cabinet. I'm sure you know where it is."

John blushes, steadfastly not looking at him as he makes his way to Sherlock's bathroom. He turns around to look at him as he goes. He can hear him rummaging about, the shift of tablets in their cardboard packaging. It feels...different. Sherlock turns away, looking at the fire instead. It cackles, burning, the flames rising and falling. Sherlock has never known quiet domesticity before, with anyone, really. Not even when he was a child at home. It's comforting. The noise in his head is suspiciously quiet.

"I'm surprised you have these, actually," John's voice shakes him out of his introspection. He comes to stand in front of him, holding up some kind of medicinal elastic wrap. It must have been Mycroft, stocking him up with things he doesn't need. Or does, actually. Sherlock narrows his eyes.

"Do you know how to use it?"

John gives him a withering look as he sits down on the table, bringing Sherlock's foot on to his lap with a bit more force than necessary. "No, of course not. Not like I'm studying to be a doctor, or anything."

"Kidding," Sherlock lets his head fall to the side, smiles lazily at John. John's fingers are clasped gently around his foot, warm against his cold skin. They press gently. John's eyes are unfathomable, as he presses more insistently, moves his hand up to Sherlock's ankle, rubbing the point of injury with soft touches.

"Joh-" Sherlock starts, the name ending in a soft groan. His eyes shut of their own accord, and he can feel John's hands moving up, around his shin. Two hands now- one rubbing hard circles into the arch of his foot, the other at his heel. He's good- too good. Sherlock bites his lip to prevent another embarrassing sound from escaping. "You're good at this," he says instead. His voice comes out in a breathy whisper.

"I'm good at a lot of things."

He says these kind of things so easily, Sherlock thinks in wonder. With no idea of how it affects him. It makes him open his eyes to stare at John. John's gaze is bright and blue, burning into his. His hands move up his foot, carefully avoiding his ankle, spreading warmth into him. His mouth twitches
as he looks at Sherlock. His eyes trail down to somewhere on Sherlock's throat. They're heated.

"You- you smell different, now. I thought it was the other omegas at the bar. But it was you," his seems to say the words with a little difficulty, almost as though there are invisible hands at his throat. There's a ruddy flush along the skin. He skirts his gaze along Sherlock's shoulder instead, dropping down to some other point on his body.

"It wouldn't do for me to smell like anything else besides myself. The entire point of it was to myself irresistible, a target impossible to ignore." Sherlock answers. John does something particularly lovely to his foot and it makes him suddenly boneless, eyes fluttering closed again. "What does it smell like?" he finds himself asking.

John is silent for a few seconds. He's thinking- trying to figure out Sherlock's specific fragrance, and that- that does things to Sherlock. "Cinnamon," John finally says, gaze meeting his. "Roses. Er. It's a bit...spicy? Makes my throat burn- but in a good way. It's different, comes and goes. I've been smelling it all evening. Makes it...hard to concentrate."

Hard to concentrate? He opens his eyes and looks at John, eyes trailing down his throat, the dip of his collarbones before they disappear under his shirt. Sherlock wonders what that entails. Was he thinking about him the same way Sherlock has been, all evening? Has John, too been seized by a sudden, all consuming desire to shove Sherlock against the nearest surface and snog him senseless? Plagued by ridiculous questions like how he looks while aroused, what arouses him- it is impossible that John has been arrested by the same thoughts, or that his mind has been lingering on every touch shared, that John would be cataloging the very shape of his smile, or the curl of his hair, the curve of his neck-

He clears his throat.

"Imagine what it must be like for us," he counters. "Your lot doesn't even have suppressants."

John opens his mouth to argue that yes, they do, but Sherlock interrupts him- "Hardly any of you use them. Not unless you're a doctor, or a soldier- or a policeman. You know what I mean. My point is, we smell you all the time."

"What's it like?" John asks. He sounds curious, rather desperately so. His tongue darts out to wet his bottom lip. Sherlock is caught by the motion of it. He swallows, turning away, sniffing discreetly just to remind himself of it. It's indulgent- all of this. Everything. Sherlock feels a twinge in his chest but he smothers it mercilessly.


_Something I'd like to roll around in, cover myself with, maybe have inside me_, he thinks, but doesn't say.

"Hmm," John stops massaging his foot, and Sherlock battles the urge to whine. Instead he feels the hush of the material of the bandage as John unrolls it. He's achingly gentle as he lifts Sherlock's foot up to wrap it from below. It takes him barely a minute- it's tight, but not too much, it feels secure. Sherlock feels the pain abate a bit.

"How's it feel?" he asks, his hand still curled possessively around his foot.

"Better."

"Okay," John says, with a kind of finality, and with a last squeeze around Sherlock's foot, starts to get up.
Sherlock is suddenly seized with a moment of panic. John is leaving. The adventure is over, and John has taken what he wanted and now he'll leave and go away and Sherlock will be alone. The noise in his head will be back again and he won't be able to sleep, and the idea is unfathomable, the hours and hours of quiet until Sherlock injects something into himself to make it go away. John will leave, and it's doubtful he'll come back, and Sherlock can't bear it.

His hand seems to move of its own accord as he grips John's wrist. "No," he rasps. He is pleading, he realises. He wants John here so badly, he doesn't even care.

John frowns as he looks down at him, his gaze skids over Sherlock's fingers stopping him. "Sherlock...I have to-"

"No," Sherlock repeats. And then, "Stay."

John opens his mouth to respond but Sherlock continues speaking, unsure if his words even make sense. "It's logical. It's past midnight and it'll be a nightmare getting a cab at this hour and it's quite cold outside and you only have that jacket. You staying the night is the most rational alternative and it's not as though it's your first time."

He takes a breath.

John doesn't say anything for a few seconds, and it's agony, watching him think. "You want me to?"

"I wouldn't ask if I didn't, would I?" Sherlock responds, exasperated.

John's smile is unsure. "You--you're not just- out of a sense of obligation..."

Sherlock rolls his eyes. "As though I would do anything because I thought I was obliged to, John."

John lets Sherlock tug him back towards him a bit, like a needy child. He finds the idea of not touching John at this moment ridiculous.

"Alright, I'll stay," he promises.

"Good."

John's responding laugh is lovely. It's the best thing he's heard in years, and he wants to bottle it up and keep it somewhere safe. John's hand cups the underside of Sherlock's wrist, and it's brilliant, how even a little bit of physical contact can make Sherlock's skin burn in the most unfamiliar of ways.

Sherlock finds himself tugging John even closer. John shouldn't even allow him- god-

"Hey, Sherlock, you okay?" John's free hand comes to rest beneath his ear, thumb brushing against his cheekbone. "I know you're...well. You. But you know. You can tell me."

"Tell you what?"

"That you don't want to be alone. It's okay to say it, sometimes."

Sherlock frowns at him. John thinks he's in need of comfort because he was assaulted? He wants to laugh. Ridiculous. It was his plan to be assaulted. He decides not to remind John of it.

"Do I need a reason to want you to stay the night?"

"No, I suppose not." John's hand moves to his nape, buries itself in the thick curls. John's eyes skate over his face, lingering on his broken nose, his black eyes. John's gaze darkens, his jaw clenching. "I probably would have shot him, if he'd done anything to you. I was pretty close to it. I would have. I
almost did. I didn't care if I'd get arrested. I just wanted him dead.”

"I know,” Sherlock's voice is a hushed whisper. He lets go of John's wrist only to clutch as his collar. He doesn't know why he does it.

John's mouth is very close to his. He can feel the rush of breath, warm, lovely. His gaze drops to John's throat, where his Adam's apple bobs skittishly as he swallows. Sherlock's spidery fingers gently touch the skin there. It's flushed. John is bent over him, one hand supporting himself on the armrest, one hand at the back of his head.

Sherlock's finger dip into the vee of his shirt, feels hair tickle the tips. John exhales sharply, and the grip in his hair tightens. It makes heat pool in Sherlock's gut. He pulls more insistently.

"Sherlock, I-"

"Yes," Sherlock answers immediately. He doesn't know what he's agreeing to. Only that, when John's mouth slants over his he knows this is exactly what he wanted. John's lips are wet, and chapped, and Sherlock opens his mouth immediately to let his tongue in, and he wraps his arms around John's shoulders, trying to get closer- god this position is awkward as hell.

"Hang on," John breathes against his lips, and he feels arms dig in under his waist- John is lifting him up- what? Sherlock tightens his grip around John's shoulders, and he has to wrap his one good leg around John's waist to avoid falling off. But John's arms seem to be enough, because the next thing he knows, John is spinning them around and then landing with a heap on the chair instead, Sherlock is in his lap, one leg curled next to his thigh and his injured foot trailing on the floor.

"Fuck," he breathes, and John moves forward to catch his lips again.

"Does it hurt? Your foot?" he asks.

"Shut up," Sherlock says by way of reply, cupping his hands over John's ears. "And kiss me."

"Sherlock, I don't- the painkillers-"

"I am in my senses. Do what I tell you."

John grins against his mouth, bites down on his bottom lip, hard. Sherlock's moan sounds ridiculous even to his ears, but John must like it, if the way he grips Sherlock's hips is any indication. Sherlock sighs, licking at John's mouth, and rolls his hips against John's crotch.

"Want to- let me-” John's mouth moves to his neck- and he's- scenting. It makes Sherlock's skin flare, his fingers find their way to John's shoulders, dig in to the skin- why won't John take off his shirt- Sherlock wants to-

John's tongue licks a stripe down Sherlock's neck. "John, a h -” His hands slip under his shirt, cupping the swell of his ribs. Sherlock quivers.

Sherlock is certainly not new to sex. He has had sex with several people, but he’s never felt so much before, never felt the need to take off John’s clothes so he can lay on top of him, feel the heat of skin against his own. Never been so...out of control.

He doesn't even mind when John grabs both his wrists and bends them behind his back, restraining him. It makes him want- fuck, what does he want?

"You smell- fuck- you smell amazing," John continues to nibble at his neck, one hand holding his
arms back, one at his hip, encouraging Sherlock's grinding effort. He can feel John's substantial erection against his crotch- and the wetness seeping into the back of his jeans. If John would just slip his hand and swipe his fingers against him he would be sopping wet-he's sure John would like that, him dripping writhing, just for him-

"Didn't know you could talk like that," John says, a hint of laughter in his voice, and Sherlock's eyes widen. Did he say all of that out loud?

"I-"

"Shh," John quietens him, the hand at his hip reaching up to slip under his shirt again. The skin on skin contact makes him gush even more, he can feel the muscles in his arse contracting, searching for a cock. John swipes a hand over his chest, tweaks a nipple.

"Oh god," Sherlock moans, burying his face in John's neck. "Please, god, do something-

"What do you want? Tell me what you want," John shifts them so Sherlock is upright, he catches the lobe of Sherlock's ear between his teeth. It makes Sherlock squirm in his lap, and John's grip at his wrists tighten. It's impossibly arousing, being held like this, Sherlock thinks he'd like to ask John to tie him down and fuck him- oh fuck-John is fondling him through his trousers, hand achingly gentle and Sherlock doesn't want gentle, he wants John to bite him, pull his hair- claim him- god why won't he do that?

"I- I don't know," Sherlock answers honestly, bites his lip. John kisses him again. His nose hurts, and the skin around his eyes hurts, but he can't- doesn't want John to stop.

"That's okay," John says softly. "That's fine." And he continues kissing a trail down Sherlock's neck, stopping to mouth at his collarbone. Sherlock's skin feels cold and hot all at once, and he doesn't know what to do with himself, so he's glad John holds him in a way he doesn't have to move. Gingerly, he lifts his leg up so he's properly straddling John's lap, thighs on either side of him. It helps him to bear down on John's cock.


"God, yes," Sherlock reassures him, and tries to shift his hips so that he can feel John's erection against the cleft of his arse. "Need- something. Give me something, John, please-

John lets go of his wrists, which allows Sherlock to wrap his arms around his neck again. They're sore, and it feels lovely. Perhaps John would leave some more bruises for him, and Sherlock would feel them even later, know that John held him there, so tightly that people would know someone had touched him. He can feel John's fingers at his jeans, unbuckling his belt, slipping the jeans down. He lifts his hips, cries out when there's too much weight on his ankle. John kisses him quiet, putting a warm hand on his foot to massage it. "Alright?" he asks.

"Yes," Sherlock replies.

When his jeans are around his thighs, John places a hand on the swell of his arse, squeezes. Sherlock takes a shaky breath, his lips against John's but neither of them doing anything. He shudders when John places one finger against his wet hole. "Can I- Can I-"

"Yes, please," Sherlock begs, and when John slips a finger inside he practically keens. It's so good, it's so good, and he bears down a little, squirming, he can hear himself pleading but god know what he's pleading for. John is kissing him again, and there are two- three- fingers inside him now. He can't even kiss him back properly, his mouth lies slack, and John's tongue sweeps inside of him, and
he imagines that's probably how John fucks as well- without restraint, barely giving him time to breathe. The thought makes him whimper, and another gush of wetness probably coats John's fingers by this time. He's literally fucking himself on them, his cock pressed up against John’s abdomen, making soft noises that are little more than cut off vowels.

John finally pulls away, breathing hard, and they rest their foreheads against each other, breath mingling. Sherlock restlessly chasing orgasm on John's fingers, John's fingers fucking him open like he'd like to fuck him next. Would John bend him over, or would he take him like this, Sherlock riding his cock? Or does he like his partners on their backs, looking into their eyes, watching their mouth fall open when he hits the right spot- Sherlock takes a shaky breath. He hasn't ever had sex like that. He'd like to, though. He really would.

"God, you're going to make me come," he says helplessly. Like John is a storm, a hurricane, a force of nature, and Sherlock is caught in the force of it, being swept away without a trace.

John's kiss on the corner of his mouth is soft, feather light. "That's the idea," he breathes, and laughs. Sherlock giggles too, then, and oh, this is different. Do people laugh during sex? He doesn't know. Hasn't really had the opportunity to explore that possibility. Sex is...very different, with other people. Not like this. Sherlock has never been so aroused before, never needed an orgasm so badly, not even with Victor.

Sherlock's eyes meet John's and they're dark, barely a ring of blue around the pupils. His hair falls over his forehead and the set of his jaw is hard-possessive. He looks at Sherlock like he's something that should be his, and Sherlock finds that there's nothing he would like more than to belong to him.

"John," he says, breathlessly, unable to say anything else.

"You- you are the most beautiful thing I have ever seen," John tells him, his voice a husky, raspy thing- and pulls him closer, up and against his cock. Sherlock has never had anyone tell him that before. He wants to say something equally poetic, something profound, worthy of what John makes him feel but he can barely think. John's fingers, his mouth, his cock slotting against his- god. Sherlock imagines somewhere, there are volcanoes erupting, lava burning everything around them to a crisp. That's what he feels like now, as though he's on fire, and he doesn't want it to stop.

"God, don't stop," he echoes, and he feels John's hand at his hair again, gripping the curls, wrenching his head to one side so he can kiss his neck, softly. It's at odds with John's rough hands.

"Beautiful," he repeats, and Sherlock knows that's he's going to spontaneously combust, any moment, now.

"John, please."

John crooks his fingers suddenly and Sherlock shudders, body going rigid as the waves crash. "Ah...ah..." he grips John's shoulders, hard, burying his face into his neck, teeth finding the taut skin of his neck...biting. John's arm around his waist brings him closer, his own cock against Sherlock's, friction, heat-

Sherlock comes over his shirt, feels the wetness slip out of his arse in thick streams, he's crying out John's name..once...twice- until he's finally still, his orgasm wrenched out of him, leaving him feeling limp and exhausted.

He doesn't know how long he stays there, it's dark and quiet here, face in John's shoulder. Doesn't think he'd want to move, ever. Cocooned in someone else's warmth, Sherlock finds it...intoxicating.
Like a drug. Better than any drug, in fact.

"Hey," John lifts his head so he can look into his eyes. John's hands are cool against his flushed skin. He runs a finger over the corner of his mouth, dragging a lip down. His gaze skirts around the skin, there is a gentle triumph in it. Like Sherlock is a conquest he's made. Many people have looked at Sherlock like that. This is the only time he hasn't minded.

"You have sensitive skin."

"What's that supposed to mean?" Sherlock is surprised at his own voice. It's hoarse, like he's had a cock down it, but he hasn't- which suddenly reminds him- how selfish of him! He starts to slide down John's lap even as John is saying something about his skin being pink-

"Sherlock, what are you-"

"Let me- let me do something," he explains, but John grabs him.

"Don't be ridiculous," he says, sounding a bit angry. But his eyes are soft as they regard Sherlock. "It's not a barter exchange, don't be stupid."

"But I- I didn't do anything. And you're still-" he cups his hand around John's cock, which yes, is still quite hard.

"I can manage that," John defends, moving his hand away. "I don't need it, you know? What we did right now..was pretty great."

Sherlock finds himself shaking his head, mouth opening to protest. "You don't- you don't want me?"

He feels curiously rejected. He hates how small his voice sounds. Horrified, he finds tears prickle at the corners of his eyes. What-

"Sherlock-"

"I can. Let me. I'm good at this."

John's mouth falls open, and he pulls him back up more insistently.

"But, John-" he doesn't know what to say.

He's never- never just- not just him. He feels like there's something he's missing, as though John is just a second away from demanding something else from him, and he won't be able to give it, and why won't John let him?

"Sherlock, I really don't- of course I want you, don't be stupid-but, later. Okay? I promise. Later. That was just for you, and for me, I won't deny that-" he smiles. "But you don't have to. I promise."

He wraps both arms around Sherlock's waist. He imagines he's quite sticky everywhere, but John doesn't seem to care. "I like doing that. I like- watching you come undone. It's very, very good. So good I don't need anything else."

Sherlock's chest hurts, his heart hurts. He knows that he will feel differently about everything tomorrow. But he feels dizzy, and light headed, and really quite wonderful as of this moment, so he ruthlessly suppresses the insistent voice in his head that's saying You don't deserve him.

"I came all over your shirt," he comments, looking down at John's ruined button down.

"I have others." The curve of John's mouth as he smiles is fond, sweet. Quite different from the
predatory smile he had on his face each time Sherlock was moaning a few seconds away. Sherlock was right- it is like flicking a switch. Fascinating.

John helps him up then, seats him on the couch while he pulls up his pants and jeans. "You look worn out," he remarks, pushing back Sherlock's thick hair from his forehead. "Let's get you into bed."

"Hmm," Sherlock hums lazily, stretching. His bones pop.

"Come on, up you get," John pulls him up in one swift move, and oh- he's being carried like a bride. He instinctively wraps his arms around John's neck.

"W-what are you doing?" he stammers. Sherlock feels a whoosh in his stomach. Butterflies, he believes the expression is. Certainly doesn't feel like butterflies though. Feels like something much larger. Gargantuan, perhaps.

"It's too much- of a bother to walk to your room like it's a three legged race," John breathes out. Sherlock is quite slender, but he's by no means very light, so it's not unexpected that it takes John some effort. He pushes Sherlock's bedroom door open, and lays him down on the bed gently, ploughing him with pillows behind his head.

"Pyjamas?" he asks, hovering above Sherlock's face.

"I'm not an invalid," Sherlock defends hotly. "They're over there, on the back of the chair." John finds a pair of discarded pyjamas and his silk robe, and throws them at his head. It slides off his face in a hush of silk, and Sherlock scowls at him.

"No need to do that, either," he adds crossly, and starts to pull his shirt off over his head.

When he's shirtless, he can see John's gaze fall down to his chest, heated, that same edge of possessiveness. Sherlock feels something submissive in him want to present himself on all fours, suddenly.

"John-" he starts, not sure what he'll say next.

He's not prepared for John suddenly crossing the room in one fluid step, placing one hand at the back of his neck to lift his head up. He kisses him again, and it's quick, hard, the slice of teeth, the thrust of his tongue. By the time he has the sense to reach for John, pull him closer, maybe right on top of him, John pulls away. They're both panting. John's eyes are dark. Sherlock can feel the blood rushing in his ears. His head is spinning.

"Sorry," John says, breathlessly,

"Don't be," Sherlock replies.

"I should, ah-" he straightens up, clearing his throat. He gestures to the stains on his shirt.

"Yes," Sherlock agrees, and watches rather unhappily as John leaves the room.

Sherlock's fingers are trembling when he reaches for his pyjamas, god, his entire body feels like he's burning and it's nothing like heat.

By the time he manages to clean himself and put on his pyjamas, Sherlock feels hollowed out. He throws the soiled clothes on the floor, and curls up on the bed, burying his hands underneath the pillow. At some point of time, he hears the door creak open and the sound of footsteps. John's voice
at his ear. "Sherlock, I think I should go-"

"Stay," Sherlock tells him, voice scratchy from sleep. "Please."

"I-" he opens one eye, and his vision is blurry, but he can make out John's conflicted expression. Tedious.

"Stay here," he repeats. He reaches a hand out behind him and pats the space on the bed next to him. "here."

"Sherlock, I can't-"

"Why not?" Sherlock argues. "Convenient. It's a big enough bed. Shut up and sleep here."

John disappears after that, and Sherlock considers getting up to check that John hasn't left him, the idea makes him panic again- but soon he feels the bed dip. He doesn't turn around to check if it's John. Instead, he feels the comforter pulled up over his body, tucked up around his chin. The lamp is clicked off.

Sherlock drifts.

Chapter End Notes

hey guys! this'll be last update for a couple of months, because of some real life shit that will get me very busy. I will try to update asap, though! And thank you everyone who has been commenting, and clicking that 'kudos' button and sending me positive feedback and constructive criticism! (every comment counts) This fic would not have got this far without you. <3 I don't visit tumblr these days (much) but you can always send me a message here :)
"What does it matter," Sherlock snarls. "You're always going to be upset with me. I'm always going to upset. That's just how it works, and I don't know how to stop it, and I told you, I told you but you didn't listen. And now you— you try to— with this self righteous shite—"
body feels stiff, and he can hear various bones and joints popping as he manages to quietly prop himself up against the headboard. John sleeps on, unmindful and oblivious. His hair falls over his forehead in blonde wisps. His eyelashes are near translucent, barely there. Sherlock hasn’t really noticed them before. He’s lying on his side, one hand shoved under the pillow, one hand on the space between their pillows, the fingers curled lightly. The fingernails are clean, crescent shaped; the fingers calloused, belonging to someone who uses them a lot.

Sherlock swallows, his throat burning all of a sudden. He feels oddly warm, like the heating is turned up too high, it’s rather stifling. He brings trembling fingers to the back of his neck. No raised scars, no dried blood, but he can feel the bruises, still. They sting just a bit. He looks down at himself. Of course no one would be able to tell, but he can smell it on himself. Dried semen, his own. When he shifts a bit, the cleft of his arse is tacky and sticky with last night’s remnants. He doesn’t even remember taking a bath.

He’s not entirely sure what he’s supposed to feel. Sherlock supposes it’s part of his self-preservation technique, to try not to feel anything at all. He must have second guessed this last night, but have told himself to stop, told John to stop. But if his body is any indication, he must have let events take their course instead. Perhaps it was inevitable, perhaps his body found someone who was willing to let him in and Sherlock let himself be dragged by the unstoppable force of the tide. That’s what it felt like last night, at least.

It’s easy to let his thoughts take that direction when John is sleeping in his bed, on his stomach and his back rising and falling gently with each exhale. That John is some kind of planetary body that attracted him through the sheer force of its gravity and Sherlock had no choice in the matter. Natural, the rules of Alpha-Omega coupling, like a primal and ancient law. He could write it down as that.

It’s so easy.

Lestrade’s gun lies on the bedside table, glinting dully and oddly conspicuous in his barely used bedroom. Sherlock swallows. For some reason it seems like a reminder.

***

John must have been exhausted, because he barely stirs even as Sherlock drags himself off the bed and limps his way out of his bedroom. He doesn’t want to use the crutches because they make too much noise, and besides, they make him feel like an invalid.

John had fallen asleep in his jeans. It must have been uncomfortable. Was that a deliberate decision, to not sleep in his pants, in order to shield Sherlock’s propriety?

His jacket is hanging precariously off the top of a chair, the sleeves still rolled up. When he looks
more carefully, there’s a smudge of blood at the sleeve. Small, barely noticeable.

Sherlock thinks about John's eyes, burning cobalt, regarding him with possessive tenderness, fingers gripped tightly around his gun, gentle fingers at his belt.

****

The bruises have darkened over night. Sherlock gently prods the ones on his face, yellow and blue around his nose and his eyes, a veritable canopy. Finger shaped marks around his throat. It looks awful. There are lighter, gentler bruises around his wrists. There is a dull ache when he twists them, nothing unbearable, but the pain is steady and undeniable. He wonders if anyone who saw them would be able to differentiate them; bruises made by two different people, with two different intentions.

He takes off his shirt; his stomach is filmy with dried semen and sweat. Sherlock draws a finger down the flat planes of his abdomen; what a pity that he doesn’t have any of John’s genetic material clinging to his body now. The thought makes his stomach tighten; having the evidence of John’s desire streaked all over his skin. He still smells faintly like Alpha, he’s not on suppressants and if he walked out like this it would have been only natural to assume that he’d spent most of last night being fucked by his mate.

It didn’t happen, obviously.
It could have though. It could have.

If Sherlock has said yes, if he had asked for it, would John have…?
Probably. Maybe it would have helped. Gotten it out of his system.

Sherlock turns on the hot water and it seems like a tragedy, evidence of last night’s adrenaline fueled decision leaving his body. The water swirls around the drain, gravity assisting the process. Sherlock has had his fair share of morning afters, and it has always been easy to leave without saying goodbye. Take what he wanted and shut the door on whoever it was that had given it to him, and barely spare a thought about seeing them again. It never meant anything. Sherlock has known what it feels like when you invest feeling and emotion into a person and it hasn’t ended well. He would do anything to not feel like that again.

He looks at his bruised wrists, water making rivulets as it slides down his skin, and he doesn’t feel too sure.
When he comes back inside his room, John is still asleep. He must have shifted a bit. He snores very softly.

Sherlock stands there for almost a minute, neither entering the room or leaving, hovering. Going inside the room and getting back into bed seems to him to be making some sort of agreement, as though he is committing himself to something he doesn’t quite have name for yet.

One of the windows was left open last night and every few seconds the curtain is lifted by the force of the breeze and John’s blonde hair ruffles slightly. Sherlock empathises with the wind, how awful it must be to disturb a path for itself, only to never be seen or acknowledged. Drifting in the air, without direction or purpose.

He swallows, steps back and closes the door.

He rummages in the living room for any clean clothes lying around, terrified of waking John up by making a racket in his bedroom. The only things he finds are yesterday’s discarded clothes. His shirt still has a few specks of blood around the collar. His nose twinges in memory. He decides to forego a shirt and slips on his sweatshirt, and last night’s jeans. Sherlock can barely recognise his own scent; even after taking a shower he smells like something unknown and unfamiliar. A bit like John, a bit like himself. He supposes this is what smells like after sharing a heat.

What would it be like, he wonders idly, sharing something like that with John? Sherlock has forgotten what it’s like anyway, the red hot need, the helplessness, the gaping want in his gut. He imagines allowing John to see him like that, to be witness to his ceaseless, uninhibited desire, seeing him dripping, writhing-

His cheeks flush. He knows exactly what John would do. He thinks about last night, the kisses lined with the edge of teeth, bruising fingers at his waist, John’s hot breath on his neck. Sherlock doesn’t remember wanting quite so much, or quite so desperately. He only realises he’s been rubbing his wrists the entire time when he trips over his wallet which is lying on the ground. Scowling, he bends down to pick it up, which brings him eye level with the sofa cushions, and what he had stashed behind them only yesterday.

He digs it out from behind the cushions even before he knows what he’s doing. Sebastian was right; it’s top quality, the very best: Sherlock can tell from looking at it. Whatever he acquires or purchases is the purest he’s ever seen, notwithstanding what Sherlock could synthesise himself, had he the time or the inclination. Its crushed already, what looks like about 4 grams of it. On a regular day this
would have taken an entire day with Sebastian to obtain, maybe a blowjob or two. Nevertheless.

He wonders, later, if he had even spared a thought to John sleeping in the next bedroom.

His best guess would be, no. Because it didn’t matter what John thought anyway, Sherlock is no good for him and he would be doing him a favour.

***

He shoots up in the bathroom, wipes the floor dry because he doesn’t have any other flat surface to work with and he doesn’t want to leave any traces on the coffee table. He snorts the coke off the floor using his last 10 pound note, and once he’s done he leans back against the door, his bandaged ankle suddenly looking vulgar and unseemly against the white tile.

He’s quick to clean up after that, ties the plastic bag securely and squishes it into an empty cardboard box that presumably used to hold his suppressants. He doesn’t have any at the moment, but he’ll buy them later. For now he puts the box back in the medicine cabinet and leaves it there, looking innocuous and nonthreatening next to shampoo and shaving cream.

He should have eaten something first, but now he can barely think about stomaching anything down. He briefly considers making his way back to his bedroom, worming in next to John and kissing him senseless. John, who’s currently lying soft and rumpled in his bed, who kisses Sherlock like he owns him and would willingly put himself in danger if it meant keeping Sherlock safe.

He pops a few painkillers for his ankle and then turns the handle on the bathroom door. He doesn’t expect to find John on the other side, one hand rubbing at his eye and the other curled in a fist, poised to knock.

As soon as he sees him, his mouth curls into a smile. It’s a soft, sleepy thing, none of the crude flirtatiousness or suggestiveness from last night. It’s gentle, and kind, and sweet- and no one has smiled at Sherlock like that. Like Sherlock is something to be fond of.


“Good morning,” John says, his words still slurred by the vestiges of sleep. And then he leans forward and kisses Sherlock like it’s the most natural thing in the world.

Something light up in Sherlock’s brain then, and it seems inconceivable that John should be so close and yet a kiss is all he gets, as though that barest brush of lips is supposed to suffice, supposed to be enough to dampen this unending, ceaseless want-
“Sher-” John’s surprise, catching and pulling at the vowels of Sherlock’s name, only serve to help Sherlock press his tongue in further, lean into John even more, whose arms curl around his waist to steady him.

Suddenly he’s pushing him back inside the bathroom and kicking the door closed with his foot and Sherlock is covering John’s shorter frame with his own, and John smells fantastic- dried sweat and adrenaline from last night, his alpha scent buried beneath it all, Sherlock could just roll around in it. Instead he buries his nose in John’s neck and pushes his hips against him. John’s hand reaches up to curl against his nape, fingers threading themselves into the curls at the base of his neck. Sherlock mouths along the side of his throat, and John’s grip tightens.

“What- what are you doing?” he gasps, as Sherlock scrapes his teeth against his jaw. He knows what he smells like- the scent of an aroused omega, without the tart richness of heat, without the heady pheromones that make you lose all semblance of thought. It should be infinitely better than anything John has every smelled before.

He doesn’t reply to John’s question, instead sucks his lobe into his mouth, which makes John’s hips jerk against his. He was already at half mast when he came to the bathroom, probably morning wood that he was used to ignoring. It doesn’t take much to get him fully erect, and isn’t that just wonderful, Sherlock can smell it on him. John should have taken him last night, right in that chair, Sherlock wouldn’t have been left with so many questions, so much useless energy with nowhere to go and nothing to do except find a place inside John’s chest and stay there.

John’s hand find their way underneath his dirty old sweatshirt, cold against the fevered planes of his abdomen. They seek out more skin, hungry in their conquest, until they cup the Sherlock’s ribs as though John is trying to hold him still. Sherlock doesn’t want to be still though, his heart flutters wildly against his chest and his blood is rushing in his ears and he’s never really met anyone like John which means it’s going to hurt like a bitch when he has to lose him.

Wouldn’t it be just heavenly if John took off all his clothes and shoved Sherlock against the sink and fucked him senseless? If Sherlock had nothing, if he was left with absolutely nothing, he thinks he’d die a happy man if he knew what it was like to have John inside of him. To let someone in who said his name with softness, not as though it were a weapon to wield.

“Sherlock, that’s- ah- what?”

Sherlock realises that he may have, once again, said some of that out loud. His high is too magnificent to worry about tiny things like that but to avoid further embarrassment he gingerly slides down to his knees. It’s difficult to do it with his heavily bandaged ankle, which seems like an unbearable burden at this point, but John’s hand in his hair when Sherlock’s mouth closes, hot and soft, over his clothed erection, is enough to encourage him to forget about it.
Sherlock is quick and eager, mouths over John’s sizable cock until John is patting uselessly at his head in an effort to take him into his mouth. He pulls his jeans down, fumbling only a bit in his enthusiasm. Scoops the tip of it into the cradle of his lips, John’s fingers thread themselves into Sherlock’s curls, tug incessantly. He should like to tell John that he likes having his hair pulled, John could do that any time and Sherlock would melt into a puddle of want.

Instead he decides to stop teasing and slowly, ever so slowly, takes John all the way into his mouth. He chokes only slightly, can feel John’s hips stutter at the noise.

“God, Sherlock, your mouth-” the sentence ends in a low groan as Sherlock starts to move his mouth up and down, a steady rhythm. That is, until John’s grip tightens and he begins to guide Sherlock’s head. Sherlock doesn’t need guiding, he’s perfectly capable of giving a fantastic blowjob without any unnecessary patting, but if John wants to fuck Sherlock’s mouth he is only too happy to comply.

“You’re-ah- fuck-good-you were right-” John sounds breathless, and Sherlock wants to drown in it. He rises up higher on his knees, pins John’s hips to the wall with his hands, bobs his head up and down his shaft, swirls his tongue around the tip. He raises one hand to the base of his cock and lightly feathers his fingers across it. John moans, hips stuttering with the effort of not shoving all the way inside. Sherlock allows himself to choke, just a little, to see how John would react. The noise makes his cock twitch, even as he pulls out.

Sherlock looks up at him, frowns, and pushes him back inside with a hand to the small of his back.

“Jeeezus,” he breathes out, and now his cock hits the back of his throat. Sherlock swallows, trying to get it deeper, until his nose is buried in hair, and John is slipping in and out of mouth, groaning. A minute passes and he’s fucking his mouth in earnest, and Sherlock feels tears prickle at the corner of his eyes, the tell tale lack of air supply. His own prick strains against the front of his jeans. He can feel himself getting wet.

“Shit, Sherlock- oh god, gorgeous, you’re gorgeous,” John murmurs,

There it again, John’s habit of complimenting him during sex. It catches him off guard, like John does so often, so charmingly. He’s been called several things of course, ‘whore’ being a favourite amongst his partners- but gorgeous? Not the kind of thing you’d say to a ratty junkie. A brilliant one, of course, but no one needs to know that.

He’s practically rutting against John’s leg now, mindlessly, like he’s already in heat. John’s fingers are tight and unforgiving, deliciously painful, and he can barely think beyond the blunt flesh hitting his throat every second.
“Fuck, Sherlock, I’m-”

Sherlock is waiting for it, waiting for the gush of fluid that he’d swallow most happily, almost like a benediction, but instead, John is pulling out and pushing Sherlock away and he only catches a bit of it, the rest spurts on his chest, some on his face.

“Christ,” John says shakily, leaning against the wall. His hands fall limply to his sides.

Sherlock rises shakily to his knees, like a newborn calf, and has to steady himself on the rim of the sink. He feels like he’s buzzing with energy until John, with his jeans finally around his hips, comes closer towards him, crowding him against the sink, and kisses him softly, cupping his hands over his ears.

A long time ago, what seems like eons ago, Victor Trevor had fucked him over a desk and summed up their coupling as something that was nothing above ordinary, an event that barely warranted a bed. Sherlock had thought that it was something important, and significant. To his sixteen year old mind, confused and tottering and struggling under the weight of its own brilliance, Victor coming inside of him meant that perhaps, Sherlock’s heart would finally be held safe inside someone’s hands.

Nothing like that happened, of course. But Sherlock imagines that the universe was laughing at him only because Sherlock was oblivious. That wasn’t important. People lose their virginity all the time, without mountains crumbling or heavenly choirs singing. But this- John’s hands cradling his face like he’s something special, his lips against his like he’s afraid that Sherlock would break, even as his heart reaches dizzying speeds under both the effects of narcotics and pheromones- this is that moment. Something slots in to place, Sherlock isn’t sure what it is. John kisses the corner of his mouth and pulls away, and Sherlock finds himself confronted with his blue eyes, honest and open; inviting.

John’s hands are at his hips, strong and grounding, almost as though they’re the only thing keeping him from floating away like a balloon.

A finger tip traces the curve of his lip, drags it down slightly by the corner. “I could make us tea,” John says, smiling. “It’d only be fair.”

Sherlock opens his mouth, almost about to agree.
He doesn’t say it.

Suddenly he’s saying, “Excuse me,” and pushing past John, opening the door and limping his way back to his bedroom. It’s a short walk, thank God for small mercies. John is still for a few seconds until Sherlock can hear him coming after him, his steps short and angry.

“Sherlock, what are you doing?”

He can’t see him because he is currently in the process of pulling his soiled sweat shirt over his head. He throws it on the floor and concentrates on flinging his wardrobe open and looking for something clean to wear.

John’s confusion is heavy, settling on top of him like a suffocating blanket.

“I’m going to be very late for class,” he answers, still not looking at him. The window is still open. He shivers, gooseflesh erupting over his skin.

“Class?” John repeats incredulously. “What class?”

“Surely you haven’t forgotten that I do, in fact, attend university.” Sherlock pulls a long-sleeved shirt over his head. He turns around to look for the jacket that’s usually kept on the back of his chair. He reaches for it, only to find that it’s John’s knit jumper hanging off precariously instead. Bullishly he moves it aside and takes his own, where it’s hiding underneath.

“I- I think I’m missing something here. You sucked my dick and now you’re leaving? Without a goodbye? Did I do something wrong?”

Sherlock is about to reply but he isn’t prepared for John to come barreling up to him, grabbing his elbow and turning him around forcefully. “Sherlock, what’s going on?”

A few seconds of shocked silence. Sherlock swallows. He can still hear his heart pounding in his ears. He feels too hot anyway, John touching him is only serving to exacerbate the situation.

“No one did anything wrong,” he says. It sounded better in his head. The words come out too
rushed, too insincere. But Sherlock can’t possibly break down in front of him here, it was me. I was being stupid. Everything I do is wrong, and I made a mess of this just like I’ve made a mess of everything else.

“Your skin’s flushed,” he suddenly says, looking down at his arm. His grip tightens, fingers feathering over his skin to rest at his wrist. “And your- your pulse is—”

Sherlock rips himself away. “I am in no need of a medical check up, thank you doctor.” It comes out the wrong way, Sherlock can understand how that must have sounded from the flash of hurt in John’s eyes.

He doesn’t back down, though. Sherlock registers the shift in his expression for barely a second before John pushes at his shoulders until Sherlock, still weak in his ankle, falls on his arse. John grabs his chin, lifts his face up towards the light.

“Your pupils are dilated,” he says, nostrils flaring. John is upset. Angry even. Despite the thrill that curls in his stomach, Sherlock can tell that this is a threat.

“I-”

“You’re high,” he finally says, straightening up and stepping back. “Jesus, Sherlock, it’s nine in the morning.”

Sherlock feels something tighten in his chest, in the most awful of ways. Fault lines on the tight membrane of his skin, the same old familiar sting of having disappointed someone.

“Well, then,” he says, getting up. He stumbles, and John reaches out to hold him on instinct. Sherlock flinches, his hand pulls back. “I thought you knew I was an addict, John. Shooting up first thing in the morning is what addicts do.”

“Sherlock-”

"No," he says, surprised by the finality is his own voice. He charges on. "You don't get to- you don't get to do that. Not after I told you, not after you knew. You can't pretend to be surprised, or disappointed when you knew I would do this, sooner or later."

He hates the way the words leave his mouth, ugly and unfair and defensive, and hates how it makes him feel. John stares at him.

"I didn't mean-"

"What does it matter, " Sherlock snarls. "You're always going to be upset with me, I'm always going to upset. That's just how it works, and I don't know how to stop it, and I told you, I told you but you didn't listen. And now you- you try to- with this self righteous shite- "

John holds up his hands, in clear surrender. His eyes are wide with alarm. "Sherlock, just- just calm down okay? We can talk about this."

Sherlock’s answering laugh is almost cruel in its malice. “I’m leaving. I take it you can show yourself
It was inevitable, obviously. Sherlock was a fool for thinking otherwise. It’s not really John’s fault, Sherlock should have known. His heart aches when he sees John’s expression, and it would really be wonderful to cry and promise John that he’ll stop being so terrible but Sherlock always makes the same mistake twice.

“Sherlock, I didn’t mean-”

“I really must be going.”

John is only human, Sherlock thinks, as he’s grabbing his wallet from off the floor and checking to see if he has any suppressants left. He doesn’t. John thinks Sherlock is amazing and brilliant but Sherlock is none of those things, and maybe now John will know.

He leaves without waiting for John to call him back.

***

He’s furious when he sees a sleek black sedan waiting for him on the corner of the street, but he can’t deny that taking the tube would be murder on his ankle.

Before he can make his way to the car, a blank faced minion is springing out of the vehicle and walking towards him, suddenly looping an arm around his.

“Good morning, sir,” he says, and encourages Sherlock to lean against him.

“Is this really necessary?” Sherlock grouses. The minion doesn’t reply, merely cocks his head in a “I don’t know, I’m just following orders” sort of way. It helps, though. He really should have brought his crutches. Together they make their way towards Mycroft’s car, and a door is opened for him. Sherlock feels like he’s being arrested. John’s awful joke comes to mind. He’s spared the torture of reminiscing when he sees Mycroft’s hawk nosed profile, his ear pressed to his mobile, making a call that’s quite probably deciding the fate of the free world.

He hates how comfortable the car is, heated seats and plush leather. Mycroft certainly does make a lot of money out of controlling the British government.

He can tell Mycroft is done with his phone call and is presumably going to commence being
tiresome. Sherlock holds up a finger and grabs the packaged water bottle from the cup holder and cracks it open. Uses it to rinse his mouth out, opens the window an inch and spits it out. Partly because his mouth still tastes a bit like semen, partly because it would disgust Mycroft. He’s careful to make sure he doesn’t hit anyone else’s car.

“What a charming display,” Mycroft comments. And then, “Have you taken to boxing again?”

Sherlock wipes his mouth with the back of his hand and puts the now tainted bottle back. “Hmm, you’re welcome. Must be the most interesting thing you’ve seen all day. And shut up, you know what I was doing. You always do.”

“Have you seen a proper doctor? Your foot looks ghastly. As does your face. What kind of case have you been working on?”

“Have you seen a dietitian? Hear they’re doing remarkable work these days. Wondrous weight loss plans, really.”

Mycroft is unfazed by his attempt at mockery. Honestly, though, Sherlock is just trying to rile him up. Mycroft hasn’t put on any significant weight since the last time he’s met him, and it’s not his fault that he has an awful desk job that requires him to practically live in his office. Still, the last thing he would do is encourage Mycroft to think that Sherlock can be considerate.

“Are you done being a child? I’d like to talk.” One hand on his umbrella, tapping, tapping. Mycroft knows he’s high. Grey eyes, much like his own, running over his skinny form, assessing, calculating. He reeks of disappointment.

“Don’t start your rubbish about sending me to rehab, Mycroft, or I will use that umbrella to claw out your eyes.”

“Sobriety would be a good idea for you, now, though. Considering you’ve shacked up with someone who doesn’t seem to be either a dealer, a pimp, or a junkie.”

This catches his attention, which irks him, because everything Mycroft says is thought out carefully and this was exactly what he wanted. His answering smile is slightly smug. Sherlock could claw it off.

“Is your own life so boring, that you have to poke your abnormally large nose into mine? Have you no other recourse for entertainment?” Sherlock feels himself tensing like a creature posed to pounce.
He’s being self defensive fairly quickly, which is obviously enough to let Mycroft know what he wants. He’s terribly clever, as much as Sherlock hates to admit it.

Mycroft smoothens down his tie, which requires no smoothening, really, since it’s pinned to his shirt with a platinum tie-clip. Mycroft clearly seems to have developed expensive tastes. When he speaks again, his voice is low and soothing, which makes Sherlock feel like an injured animal, and he hates it.

“Lestrade called me, yesterday. You’d be happy to know I haven’t been spying on you.”

Sherlock snorts. “I’m sure you have Lestrade on your payroll as well. Or you’ve threatened him. Either way, don’t pretend like someone offered this information to you on a silver platter. Clearly you’ve kidnapped me for a reason. What do you want?”

“Hardly kidnap, you’re free to go whenever you want. I would strongly advise you to stay for a few more minutes, though. This is the only way I can get you to talk to me.” Mycroft turns away from him, crossing a leg over his knee, his thumb rubbing circles into the wood of his umbrella. “I hope you know what you’re doing.”

Sherlock scoffs. He pulls the sleeves of his jacket over his hands in an attempt to give himself something to do. “You keep telling me this, as though you expect a reply. Try harder, Mycroft.”

“Are you planning on living with this man? An unattached Alpha? John Watson, wasn’t it? Says here he was born in 1992…”

Sherlock turns around in alarm, and as expected, Mycroft has produced a manila folder out of nowhere, burnt ochre, with simply the number “56” written on it.

“What on earth,” he snarls, snatching it out his hand. “Must you really? Don’t you have more important things to do, rather than stalking people I sleep with?”

He hasn’t really slept with John, probably won’t ever, but it’s still worth it to see the curl of Mycroft’s lip and the way he blanches at any mention of Sherlock’s unsavoury sex life.

“I was simply-”
“Minding my business instead of your own, that’s what,” he continues, fingers trembling now. Could be the high. Could be the fact that he’s holding a file with every pertinent piece of information on John Watson that he could possibly need—well, maybe not all of it. Mycroft surely doesn’t know about the different ways John smiles (he’s found thirteen, so far) or his favourite ice cream flavour—but still.

“Keep it, if you like,” Mycroft juts his chin towards the file, as though he is throwing Sherlock a bone. “I’m sure you would enjoy going through that. I had gone through the trouble of acquiring it before I met your...friend.” Mycroft makes an expression as though he’s swallowed a particularly bitter pill.

“I’d like to go home and burn it in acid,” Sherlock snaps. “Unless you have this memorised. I wouldn’t be surprised, considering you seem to have vast amounts of free time on your hands.”

Mycroft sighs, shoulders slumping, as though the fight has gone out of him. He rubs the bridge of his nose. Suddenly he looks much older than 27, he looks middle aged and care worn and really, what good has it done Mycroft all these years, worrying about Sherlock? Wouldn’t it serve him better if he left him to his own devices, after all, he is the black sheep of the family. No one would blame My for washing his hands of Sherlock. What presses his brother to continue looking out for him? Some misguided sense of obligation? Brotherly affection? Doubtful it’s the latter.

“Sherlock, I only want what’s best for you. It isn’t my place to decide who you should choose to...engage with. But if you would concentrate on controlling your addiction instead—”

“I don’t have an addiction,” Sherlock seethes.

Mycroft raises a ginger eyebrow. “If I were to have your flat raided right now, I would find nothing?”

“Possession is an entirely different matter.”

“Hardly. And you know it. Think about rehab, Sherlock.”

“No, thank you. You can stop the car now, I have class.”
Mycroft doesn’t really want to let him go. But even he can tell that the conversation is over. He signals the driver to pull over.

Sherlock decides not to say anything else. He opens the door and steps out, but before he shuts it closed Mycroft slides over and holds it open, palm against the glass.

“Will,” he says and oh, that is a low blow. He hasn’t call him that since they were children. “I worry about you, that is all. I hope you know that.”

Sherlock searches his face for a few seconds, thinks of a dozen different things to say, finally decides on the truth. “I know.”

Mycroft’s lips purse into a thin line. He nods.

Sherlock shuts the door, the car speeds away.

He’s left the file back in the car. Thinks of all the information in those pages, Mycroft’s agents running around, hacking into social media accounts and using government access to find out about someone so unremarkable, ordinary.

He lights a cigarette on the street corner, consciously aware of the glances he’s attracting. He’s not on suppressants and his natural scent has resurfaced, almost insidiously.

The smoke curls, thin wisps, lost in the air as soon as they’re exhaled.

***

He finds Wilkes between classes and sucks him off in a cleaning cabinet, at some point of time his hand reaches up and Sherlock gets dusted with detergent.

He has some of what he gave Sherlock left over, and Sherlock practically begs for it. They both snort it right off the floor, on top of a passably clean dustpan. Sebastian gets so high he pushes Sherlock face first against the wall and rubs against his arse till he ejaculates, right next to the dustpan. Sherlock is too high to even notice.

He tries hard not to think of John, fails.
Chapter End Notes

Sorry for the long wait guys. I know this chapter probably doesn't make up for the wait, and I'm half asleep while posting this, so let me know if there are any typos I should fix.

I also graduated college last month, which technically means I might be able to make quicker updates, but who can tell? :>

Please review and give me a sign that y'all are still enjoying this fic

NEXT UP: poor John
Incendium

Chapter Summary

“I don’t need a keeper,” he says, low enough to be a growl.

“Keeper?” he repeats, incredulously, almost laughing. “God, as if anything less than an army could keep you.”

Chapter Notes

this chapter really, really got away with me and somehow i ended up with 12k words of fluff, smut, and angst. Also: communication. Which is good, right? Also, this will be the only chapter for a while, but I won’t disappear for a year again! (hopefully) Anyway. I hope this tides you over until the next update! Let me know what you guys think! ^_^

“She never told her love, but let concealment, like a worm ‘i th’ bud, feed on her damask cheek. She pinned in thought; and, with a green and yellow melancholy, she sat like Patience on a monument, smiling at grief. Was not this love indeed?

Twelfth Night

———

“Who’s Sherlock?”

“Huh?” John turns around from where he’s folding his shirt to look at Misty. She doesn’t look away from the mirror, continues running her pale fingers through her short, brown, curly hair. She turns her head this way and that, inspecting her make up in the yellow light.

“You mentioned him a few times when we were shagging,” she informs him pragmatically, swiping on dark red lipstick.

John stills, swallows and puts his shirt back. “No one.”

“It’s alright,” she assures him, pulling on her tights. She lights a cigarette, the fag hangs loosely out of her mouth while she slips on a shirt. “An ex?”
John avoids her gaze. “Not exactly.”

“Must have been something special.” She throws her bag over her shoulder and picks up her coat. Kisses John on the cheek before walking out of his bedroom.

“Could you pick me up from my flat at eight tomorrow?” she calls behind herself. “We have class at 9 and I haven’t got a ride.”

John stares at the wall, trying to quell the sudden nausea that’s threatening to empty his stomach.

“Yeah, sure.”

***

He doesn’t have Sherlock’s photographic memory, but John still remembers his mobile number.

His thumb hovers over his screen several times a day, one tap and Sherlock would know that John tried to call him, that he was missing him, that he just wanted to talk. Each time he decides against it, stows his phone away in his pocket and tries not to touch it at all. The urge to hear his voice again is gnawing, all consuming, and John can only handle so much.

***

Each time he looks at the sky, overcast with clouds, he thinks of Sherlock.

***

At the beginning, he told himself that it was something to do with Sherlock’s mood swings, he was high at the time, couldn’t have been thinking properly. He still doesn’t understand. But when days turn into weeks and then months, no sign of Sherlock, no call, no message, John has to come to the conclusion that Sherlock doesn’t actually want to see him.

Close to a hundred messages saved in his drafts, written to be sent but rotting away instead.

John thinks his own infatuation will pass, maybe this thing with Sherlock was meant to be short-lived after all. Maybe, a voice whispers in his ear, John isn’t enough for Sherlock. There will always be something better, something more exciting, something that gives him a higher adrenaline rush and maybe John just can’t compete with it.

At one point of time, something rotten crawls inside John’s mind and he wonders if it even was a good idea, pursuing a junkie. What did he think would happen?

Immediately he fills sick and abandons that line of thought completely.

But the infatuation doesn’t pass.

John gets drunk at someone’s party and shags a girl. She was pretty, long blonde hair and dark eyes, she giggled at John’s jokes and poured tequila into his mouth while she kissed him. Nothing at all like Sherlock, she was completely predictable and suddenly John is seized with the desire to push her on to a bed. He asks her very nicely, his words slurring, he can barely get the sentence out of his mouth. She laughs, her voice chimes and rings and she brings her mouth close to his ear and whispers, yes, of course, but we should go upstairs.

John can’t remember what happens after that, but he wakes up in a wrinkled bed with a horrible
John is surrounded by people who value themselves too little.

Of course, when the black sedan pulls up outside his flat when he’s leaving for uni, John isn’t even surprised.

He knows it’s no use trying to resist, Mycroft, like Sherlock, will do anything to have his way. The pull of extremes, there’s no escaping those two. Craig, walking silently behind him, suddenly whistles at the sight of the vehicle.

“Christ, Johnny, are you shagging some minister’s kid?”

“No,” John replies darkly. The universe, it seems, has decided to conspire against him. Torment after torment. He could run, he thinks. Would serve Mycroft right having to put in extra effort to find him. He’s not in the mood for his ridiculous mind games or thinly veiled threats, but Mycroft is a connection to Sherlock, tenuous at best, and as pathetic as it sounds, it’s the only thing he’s got at the moment.

“So you’re getting inside?”

“Yeah,” John decides, trying to peer through the dark windows. Of course he can’t see anything, bloody tinted shit. “I might be a bit late.”

“You’re not going to get murdered, right?” Craig laughs but he does it nervously, as though half expecting John’s corpse to return instead of him.

“If I don’t come back, tell my mother I love her,” John deadpans, and starts walking in the direction of the car.
He gets in and there’s no sign of Mycroft, but the pretty dark haired girl from the first time is sitting next to the window, fingers tapping incessantly at her phone. She barely acknowledges John.

“Arrogant wanker hasn’t turned up himself has he?” John comments loudly, shutting the door with a bit more force than necessary. The chauffeur jumps, Anthea is unfazed. She spares him a glance, one dark eyebrow raised as though John is a dog performing a mildly impressive trick.

He crosses his arms and settles against his seat, absolutely furious and that’s good, because furious is a feeling and John’s felt hollow for the longest time and maybe Mycroft will say something to piss him off and he can punch him in the face and John will feel much, much better. Doubtless their conversation will involve Sherlock, Mycroft will threaten him, blame him for something. It’s absolutely annoying but maybe Mycroft will at least do him the favour of letting him know how Sherlock is, at least. John would take anything at this point.

***

Mycroft is standing at his desk when John is escorted inside his office, his eyes floating over a document in his hands. He barely looks up when John enters, acknowledges his presence by making a vague gesture with one hand, presumably asking him to sit.

John stubbornly remains standing, which catches Mycroft’s attention. He finally glances upward, his mouth stretching into a smile that doesn’t reach his eyes. It’s a practiced smile, somehow managing to intimidate and put John at ease all at once. Sherlock’s fake smiles lack Mycroft’s coldness, his calculated manipulation of facial expression. One of the many things that Mycroft has invested time and effort in, which Sherlock thinks isn’t worth anything.

“John, good to see you,” he says, and John could choke him.

“Don’t start with that shite,” John says brusquely. “And tell me what you want.”

Mycroft’s ginger eyebrows rise up. He puts the papers on the desk back carefully and then doesn’t say anything for a few seconds. He adjusts his tie, long, pale fingers that remind him of Sherlock run over the expensive material. John swallows.

“My brother,” he begins, not meeting John’s eyes, spinning a paper weight under his hand instead. The other hand rests in his pocket, the band of a golden watch peeks out from under his sleeve. “Has threatened me with Fratricide should I choose to contact you.”

The mention of Sherlock starts to make John’s throat burn. He exhales roughly through his nose, rubs his hand over his eyes. “Well then, Mycroft, Sherlock’s made it clear he doesn’t want to see me. So what, exactly, are you trying to accomplish with this bizarre underground meeting?”

“Hardly underground, you knew where my car was taking you,” Mycroft replies mildly, finally fixing John with his piercing grey glare. Eyes so much like Sherlock’s yet so different. He sighs and sinks gracefully into his chair, crosses his legs. John feels slightly absurd still standing, especially when Mycroft is so annoyingly comfortable in his own skin. He can feel the tension in his own shoulders, as though he’s expecting a fight. He tries to calm himself down.

“Your point being?”

“My brother is intelligent. Motivated by logic and reason, or so he says,” Mycroft cups his chin with his thumb and forefinger and regards John. His gaze stays fixed on his face, and yet John imagines that’s all Mycroft needs to assess him. “If he was, he would have chosen not to become entangled with you. From as far as I can understand, you don’t supply Sherlock with drugs nor do you have an
unsavoury background. Very dissimilar to the kind of company Sherlock usually keeps.”

John shrugs. “Flattering, but I still don’t see where you’re going with this.”

Mycroft smiles again, and it’s mildly pitying. “You and I are similar, I think, John.” He doesn’t wait for John to ask questions, continues speaking. “Sherlock seems to have...worsened since the last time you two saw each other.”

“Worsened?” John asks, and he needs to steady himself with a hand on the back of a chair.

“He’s still getting high, I imagine,” Mycroft explains distastefully, conveying exactly how he feels about Sherlock’s drug habit. “But of course, that is only a part of it.”

John waits silently for the other shoe to drop.

“It would be mutually beneficial to all of us, John, if you were the responsible one and went to see him.”

John scoffs. “He hasn’t contacted me for months—”

“And you’ve been skirting past his flat for those months. Never close enough to catch a glimpse of him, I think you barely even notice. A string of meaningless relationships, you’ve even lost some weight. You’ve known each other for what, a week? I’ve never seen this happen to him over a month, let alone a day.”

“Yeah, I know,” John hisses. “I know how stupid it sounds, and I know that it sounds pretty fucking weird, and I’m dealing with it. I don’t need you to point it out.”

Mycroft sighs, leaning back in his chair with his fingers steepled together. A familiar gesture, it makes John’s heart ache. “You misunderstand me,” Mycroft argues calmly. “‘Pretty fucking weird’ as it is, it is not entirely unheard of. Rare, but it can happen.” The words sound completely out of place in his mouth, almost vulgar. John imagines Mycroft very rarely stoops to the level of profanity to emphasise a point.

Suddenly he registers what Mycroft has just implied, and his eyes narrow in disbelief. “You can’t be serious.” If Mycroft means what John thinks he’s meant, everything would finally make sense, the cold emptiness that never seems to leave him, the gaping space where his heart should be. But it’s ridiculous...things like that don’t happen. A fairy tale, something people make up to idealise romance. It’s unreal, and impossible, and besides, mating would be required to cement it, and that...that hasn’t happened.

“No, of course not,” Mycroft agrees, his tone sure and practiced. “An archaic concept in this day and age, I was merely indicating that the other explanations for it would be far fetched. Ultimately, John, all I am implying is that we can quite easily bypass all of this pining altogether.”
Relieved to no longer be talking about the terrifying possibilities Mycroft seems to have practically pulled out of his arse, John scoffs.

“He kicked me out of his flat the last time I went to see him, so no thanks.” It’s not that John doesn’t want to see him, he should, of course, be jumping at the opportunity. But he’s had enough of Mycroft’s awkward form of match-making and his attempt to make things right. Sherlock would call him if he wanted to see him.

“You’re willfully choosing to make this situation as convoluted as possible,” he insists, and a bit of frustration creeps into his voice. “Just once, just see him once, that is all I ask of you. Unless, of course, you’ve had enough of my brother and would prefer not to.”

I couldn’t have enough of him in a lifetime, John thinks but doesn’t say. I could have him every day and still want more. He swallows, an archaic concept in this day and age.

“You know that isn’t even remotely the case.”

Mycroft spreads his arms as though John’s hit the nail on the head. He looks at him expectantly. “Exactly.”

John shakes his head, disbelieving. “Don’t you have better things to do? You can’t be paid for faffing about and attempting to ease your brother’s love life.”

Mycroft rolls his eyes. He looks young when he does that, almost as old as Sherlock. The resemblance is suddenly striking. “Hardly a week with my brother and you’ve picked up his distasteful habits. Do you see my point now, John? Would you please go and visit him?”

John’s heart thumps against his chest. Although he wouldn’t admit it out loud, Mycroft does have the undeniable advantage of knowing Sherlock for an enviable 21 years more than him. It’s possible that he’s drawn the right conclusion, and it isn’t completely impossible that Sherlock, like he always does, has been unable to voice his actual feelings. If that were the case- if- it might not be a terrible, awful, idiotic idea to see him.

Mycroft’s fingers drum against his desk, waiting for a reply. Eyes the colour of stone, steady and oddly predatory, fixed on him.

“I’ll think about it,” he finally says with difficulty.

John is furious because this somehow seems to satisfy Mycroft, as though John’s already said yes. Maybe Sherlock has received his habit of reading people from him, they both seem to excel at it.

“Make sure you wait for a few days,” he mentions absently, now that the conversation is done the frustration and grimness fades from his tone and he returns to reading his papers. His attention is shifted, John is no longer important. He understands Sherlock’s constant need to throttle him; he really is an absolute, absolute, prick.

“I’ll go when I want, you-”

Mycroft coughs delicately, his avoidance of John’s gaze suddenly deliberate. The barest flush of pink to his cheeks. “He won’t be in a fit state to answer the door, I should add.”
John is about to challenge the absurdity of the statement when the meaning behind Mycroft’s words hits him like a brick. “Oh.”

Mycroft hums in response, glances at him for a second before looking away. “He’s well protected of course, I’ve stationed security near his flat, he shouldn’t be bothered. He has access to better accommodations, but Sherlock does so enjoy thwarting my attempts to make his life easier. So you er...needn’t worry about that.”

John hadn’t been worried until the second Mycroft mentioned it, his mind suddenly rushing to supply him with images of rut crazed Alphas knocking down Sherlock’s door and pinning him down, Sherlock too far gone and weak to fight them. He has to swallow it down violently, Mycroft had just mentioned that Sherlock had security.

“But he’s supposed to be on suppressants,” John points out, desperate for anything to change the subject. The mere thought of Sherlock in heat is enough to give him an unwanted erection in the middle of Mycroft’s office.

Mycroft shifts in his seat, looking slightly guilty. “They’re becoming rather difficult to come by...I’ve put out feelers, of course. He should receive them soon. As far as I know, he hasn’t experienced a cycle in almost two years. I imagine it would be uncomfortable. I would ease it the only way I can, but what with the recent regulations,” He waves his hand dismissively. “You know how the government works.”

John doesn’t really, not Mycroft’s government anyway. Whenever he thinks of Mycroft’s job he thinks of dimly lit rooms like this one, spies and people talking to each other in hushed voices. It’s not really his fault, Sherlock made him out to be some kind of master mind, even though Mycroft isn’t much older than he is.

But the talk of suppressants catches his attention. He decides not to ask after it, Mycroft looks uncomfortable enough anyway. Sherlock is so particular about his self control, he imagines how awful it must have been for him to secede it in favour of allowing his body to have its way. Most Alphas try to make the sexual desperation the only important part about a heat, as though the Omegas rolling about in bed writhing and dripping aren’t in pain and suffering. Although John’s knowledge of heat is restricted to one or two en counters, and his experience is merely studied, he knows it’s pretty awful. He winces inwardly, thinking about Sherlock curled in on himself, aching for relief and finding none of it.

“Why-” he begins again with some difficulty, because he needs to ask Mycroft, “are you asking me to meet him? I thought you hated me.”

“I was reserving my judgments about you,” Mycroft answers politely.

“And now?”

Mycroft’s gaze lifts upwards, and suddenly John finds himself feeling quite trapped. There’s steel in that gaze, a vague threat, that coupled with the slight curve of Mycroft’s lip tells him that Mycroft is very possibly going to say one thing, and mean another, as he usually does.

“I,” he says, smiling. His incisors gleam pointedly. “Am giving you the benefit of doubt.”

Watch your step, Mycroft had said. It echoes silently in the room.

***
“He likes Jaffa Cakes,” Mycroft had called after him, when he was walking out the door.

John, still feeling unsettled and aching to strangle Mycroft with his 1000 pound tie, scowls.

***

He isn’t prepared for the scent at the bottom of the stairs. It’s not as thick or cloying as it might have been a few days ago, but strong enough for the hairs at the back of his neck to rise in anticipation. His body’s natural response, he stuffs it down. A faint trickle of sweat at his temple. God, he shouldn’t be here. No response from Sherlock for ages and now he does the worst possible thing, showing up at his doorstep unannounced. On Mycroft’s saying, no less. It’s ridiculous. He should leave, now.

The wisp of polythene at his thigh, plastic against cotton, a seductive reminder. Who’s going to give Sherlock all these sweets, if not him? He could knock twice and leave it there, like a child playing a prank. Sherlock would probably assume they were drugged and proceed to plop them under his microscope, an impromptu experiment. Still, for Sherlock, that wouldn’t be a waste of food, merely an activity done in the pursuit of scientific knowledge.

John realises he’s stalling and decides to climb upstairs. Thirteen steps, just like he remembers. He can hear Ms. Hudson’s radio playing faintly from behind the door, the whiff of vanilla.

Sherlock’s door is lined with duct tape, or at least it must have been. The gaps have been inexpertly covered with numerous layers of the stuff, but some of it is starting to curl away, catching dust and grime instead. John thinks of Sherlock, on the verge of heat, trembling and sweating and trying to tape his door shut so that no one can smell it. John has to curb the overprotective Alpha rearing its head, roaring and thumping its chest in jealous indignation. Sherlock shouldn’t have to fend for himself when John is right there, when he would literally spend the entire night outside his door making sure no one came in.

He swallows thickly; the scent has been bleeding through the gaps, and God, now it’s even stronger. Smells like someone’s bedroom after an entire night of fucking, the stale scent of sex; absolutely indecent and yet John finds himself unable to give a shit.

“You’re hovering.”

Shit.

Sherlock’s voice from inside, scratchy from disuse, just as deep as he remembers. John panics for a second, does he want him to leave? Is this unwelcome (obviously it must be) He takes a step back, considers running. He could just dump the stuff here and make a hasty escape.

“I detest hovering, John, either get in or get out.”

Not exactly welcoming, but better than John expected.

He turns the handle, and it’s a bit difficult getting the door open, what with the duct tape and all, and Sherlock doesn’t seem to be interested in helping him. He finally wrenches it open, the door bangs loudly against the wall, once, twice.

He’s trying to make sure he hasn’t done any lasting damage to the door, can see the fluid movement of Sherlock’s body from the corner of his eye, all pale skin and dark hair as he gets up from the sofa, the silken hush of his dressing gown. John turns around and forgets how to breathe, just for a second.
If the scent was uncomfortable outside, it’s nothing compared to Sherlock himself. It smells like it’s been plastered to his skin for days, which it must have been. John feels slightly relieved because all he smells is Sherlock, no unwelcome intrusions, no rough, jarring scent of an alien Alpha who had swooped in when Sherlock was desperate and stamped his claim all over him, no teeth marks on his neck.

“I, uh-" John’s feeble attempt at a conversation is cut off by Sherlock’s words, which are cutting and brusque.

“Why are you here.” his arms cross over his chest. John should say something, he really should. He could have, if he wasn’t distracted by how amazing Sherlock smells, and how beautiful he looks, even though he also looks exhausted. John’s mind unhelpfully supplies reasons exactly why Sherlock must be so worn, even going so far as to provide vivid and detailed imagery. Open mouthed and gasping, spread eagled on some sort of surface, pushing some long unidentifiable phallic object in and out of himself- Jesus, stop.

“It smells like a brothel in here,’ he blurts out, and oh god, what an awful thing to say, what was he thinking? And more importantly, why isn’t the floor swallowing John up?

Sherlock stares at him for a second, before inexplicably, his lips pull into a tight smile. “How astute, John,” he praises him, his voice low with suppressed laughter.

Sherlock is walking up to him, and John is not prepared for that. “Close the door, you’re letting in the draft,” he scolds, and because John seems to be unable to follow basic instructions, leans over and pushes it shut himself. John has to restrain himself from taking a long whiff.

The door clicks. Sherlock is close enough to touch now. His hair is distinctly longer than he remembers, which is something because Sherlock has shaggy hair in any case. His pyjamas hang low enough for John to see the sharp jut of his hip bones, shadows nestled in the hollows and dips.

John has missed him so much, missed him in a physical way. Even with him so close, his chest hurts. Christ, in what universe did John think this would have been easy?

‘I ugh, I got you this,” John holds up the bag.

Sherlock frowns, and God, in John’s head this had gone much more differently..Smooth. It didn’t involve John acting like an idiot, at least. He looks between John and the bag, and then very slowly, reaches for it. John’s grip loosens and it passes hands.

Sherlock looks through it like a little dog, sniffing and snuffling. He takes out a jaffa cake, a packet of jammy dodgers.

“What on earth- how did you…?” He suddenly looks bewildered. He stares at the bag like it’s an alien entity, as though Sherlock’s never received something like this before.

“I don’t know, I thought you’d like this..especially after, um. Well, you know. Sugars and carbohydrates are good for-after, your- uh-” He starts scrambling for words, and why is this so hard for him? He’s supposed to be a doctor, isn’t he? His cheeks flush, and John doesn’t know why, and now Sherlock is staring at him in alarm.

“Are you- are you checking up on me? Is this some sort of doctor’s visit? I don’t need a doctor, I’m perfectly fine, although I’ll admit it’s been a while. Still, I don't need a-”

“No. No! No, no, nothing like that-” John shakes his head vigorously. “You don’t even have to- you
can throw it away, if you want,” he adds stupidly. “I just. I just wanted to see you, and I know you probably don’t want to see me, and I can go now. I’ll go now.”

This was a ridiculous idea anyway. John turns around, eager to make his escape while Sherlock still seems to be processing his garbage of an explanation, but Sherlock moves quickly— in a second he’s in front of John, holding out his arms to block his exit.

“No,” he stops him, and his cheeks are dusted with pink. “No, stop. Don’t leave. I.”

Helplessness and panic skitters across his face, John stops in his tracks.

"It's just-" he shakes his head minutely, a pale pink tongue slips out of his mouth to lick nervously at his bottom lip. "After all of that, after everything I said, why are you here?" Sherlock sounds so confused, bewildered and wondering. So used to finding an explanation for everything, it must be upsetting for him when John behaves in ways Sherlock doesn't expect.

"Because I missed you," John says simply. It sounds inadequate, it barely covers exactly what he's been feeling, but searching for the right words is just going to waste time.

Sherlock stares at him, John can see him repeating the words to himself, under his breath. "You're angry," he concludes. "Because I didn't call you. It's upset you. But you still came. You could have assumed I would be unwilling to see you, considering I did kick you out of my flat last time. But you still came."


He wonders if they're actually going to get down to talking about it properly, it still feels like Sherlock is avoiding saying what he wants to. It isn't helping that John is distracted as hell and grasping for words.

He's so close now John can smell three days' worth of heat, sweat and the lingering scent of bodily fluids. Sherlock might have taken a bath, but he's still not on suppressants and he smells...fuckable, there’s no other way to put it and God, distracting is barely even cutting it.

He’s brought out of his reverie by the wrinkle of plastic and the sound of cardboard being ripped open. Sherlock mouth closing around the edge of a jaffa cake, the plastic handle hanging off a slender wrist.

“Mycroft said you’d like those.” The stilling of his body is barely noticeable, and oh, maybe John shouldn't have said that. Sherlock chews slowly, swallows, wipes his mouth with the back of his hand and hangs the plastic bag on the coat rack, as if putting it away.

“Shocking, that you've been speaking to Mycroft. Perhaps I should go through with my plan to murder him.” he observes, his voice deadpan. He walks past John and into the kitchen. “He must have painted quite a picture. It’s his fault I don’t have suppressants anyway. Did he tell you that he has his minions stationed at every street corner? He thinks I don’t know. Typical. I’m making tea, do you want some?”

The two of them dancing around each other, ignoring the tension pulled tight. Sherlock, of course, is
remarkably good at it. He can tell he’s not happy about the fact that John has spoken to Mycroft, but isn’t lashing out about it. He wishes he would though, anything would be better than just skirting past it. John wants to shake him, get him to talk to him, because while not foaming at the mouth and kicking John out is definitely good, ignoring the months and months of radio silence isn’t.

John slips out of his jacket and hangs it at the back of the door. Sherlock’s black coat sways a little next to it. He notices a cut at the sleeve. He can’t help taking a whiff. The dull scent of suppressants, Sherlock’s enticing natural fragrance...and something unfamiliar. It belongs to an Alpha, undeniably.

The twist of jealousy in his gut makes him feel like shit, so he decides not to pursue the idea any further.

When he reaches the kitchen, he’s greeted with a mug of tea and Sherlock saying, “You’ve been seeing someone.”

Sherlock’s silver eyes, looking down at him, slightly accusatory. He’s holding out a chipped blue mug, the same one he drank out of what seems like months ago when John had found a head in his fridge. John takes it from him, their fingers brush.

“Nothing serious,” he replies, leaning against the doorframe. Sherlock raises his eyebrows, reaches forward. John thinks he’s about to brush his hair but instead picks something up from his collar. A tiny brown hair, curling between Sherlock’s finger tips.

He scrutinises it before he speaks in a low tone, almost growling, “You fucked her this morning. Brunette, I did mention you have a predilection for them. Beta, isn’t she? I can smell her on you. You’ve been seeing her for a month, on and off. I assume there have been others.”

“Sherlock-”

“Doesn’t matter, it doesn’t concern me.” He dusts the hair off inconsequentially. He steps on top of it with one slippered foot, almost like he’s grinding down a cigarette butt. He turns away from John to pick up his own mug, a white one stamped with a logo John doesn’t recognise. He watches Sherlock squeeze the tea bag around the curve of a spoon before tossing it.

“Doesn’t it, though?”

Sherlock’s movements still as he’s in the process of picking up his tea. “Why would you say that.” His tone careful, a straight line, making an effort not to betray any emotion.

“Sherlock- just,” he takes a deep sigh, aware of how frustrated he sounds. He puts the mug down heavily, Sherlock looks up in alarm.

“What-”

“We haven’t spoken for months, not after the- I don’t know, almost-sex we had, I don’t know what to call it- you kicked me out because you didn’t like me talking about your drug habit, and now I come back, and you’ve got absolutely no problem letting me in? We’re having tea, for Chrissakes, like it doesn’t even matter, like it didn’t even happen.” Somehow John’s wide, sweeping gestures are meant to encompass it all, the gun, the rapist, his fingers inside Sherlock, Sherlock’s icy tone as he tells John to let himself out.

Sherlock’s hand is clenched around the rim of the dining table, his knuckles white, his cheeks flushed pink.

“Jesus, Sherlock, are you sure it doesn’t concern you? I never know what you mean, I never know
what you want me to do. I wouldn’t have— I would have barely touched anyone if I’d known— if you would have just—you wouldn’t pick up my calls, or answer my messages—”

John trails off. Sherlock doesn’t say anything for several long seconds, his lips slightly parted and his eyes narrowed like he’s trying to figure something out. Sometimes it’s flattering, being on the receiving end of such a gaze, sometimes it’s disconcerting and uncomfortable. This is one of those times.

“I wasn’t aware,” Sherlock finally says. “That we had somehow stumbled into a monogamous relationship. Usually convention dictates that there is some kind of conversation preceding such a decision. Correct me if I’m wrong, but no such conversation was involved. Of course, I imagine you and Mycroft must have covered all of this already,” he snarls out the last bit, and there, that’s it. “I imagine he must have had some insights about his wayward baby brother!” He punctuates the last word by roughly setting down his mug on the table, there’s a loud clink of ceramic against wood, light brown liquid splashes over the side, spreading.

“I spoke to Mycroft because you wouldn’t!” John shouts, suddenly feeling like kicking something. Sherlock’s lip is still curled, he stance defensive. “Four months, complete radio silence! You could have been dead, and I wouldn’t even have known!”

“Why should I?” he shouts back. “What would it have accomplished? You’ve already made your assumptions about me, haven’t you! That I’m some sort of doped up junkie, barely able to get through his day without a hit!”

“That’s what you think of yourself, you great big prat!” The two of them are suddenly closer than before, John didn’t even realise that he was stepping nearer to him. He wants to curl his fingers into Sherlock’s shirt and push him, hates himself a bit for it, but feels a kind of vicious satisfaction in Sherlock’s sudden explosion.

“Me?” Sherlock lets out a surprised bark of a laugh, disbelieving and bitter. He looks up and away from John, as though calling upon heaven for patience. “I’m not the one who’s delusional, John, I think I have a perfect idea of what I am. You’re the one who seems to be obsessed with seeing the best in me but— guess what?” Four slender fingers, tapping hard against his chest, somewhere around his heart. “It’s absolutely rotten here, so you can stop looking.”

Sherlock’s eyes, wide and shining, his mouth a perfect replica of an open scar. He’s breathing hard, hair brushes over the soft paleness of his forehead, obscures his eyes. John doesn’t know what to say, his mouth is half open around something along the lines of “please don’t say that” but he chokes on the silence.

He shakes his head slowly. “You’re mad, you idiot,” he finally breathes.

Sherlock squints at him, the hard, defensive lines of his stance blur and partially relax. “What?”

“You know what I think? I think you’re not as clever as you think you are. I think you’re scared, and you’re a coward, and you’d prefer people call you a sociopath so you’re spared the absolute horror of admitting you have feelings.”

“Are you dabbling in psychology as well, then?” Sherlock spits back, and John knows he’s goading him, can tell it from the glint of his eyes and the flash of his shoulders. Sherlock is responding in the only way he knows how, hoping to hurt John enough so that John would hate him enough to leave. “Whipped up a bit of a psychological profile, have you? Excellent, can I have a look at it as well?”
“Stop it,” John says, voice shaking. “Stop it, now.”

“Why? Does it bother you, how awful I am? It should. Perhaps this is the only way you’ll listen! Look at me, John, what exactly do you see in me, anyway?” He lifts up the sleeves of his dressing gown, they hang loosely about his elbow, revealing a flurry of track marks. Ugly and vulgar against Sherlock’s pale skin. John doesn’t want to look at them, instead he’s suddenly moving towards Sherlock, cupping the corners of his elbows and pushing them down. Sherlock exhales roughly, didn’t expect it.

“Enough. That’s enough, Sherlock.” Admonishing him. “You’re better than this. Can’t you see that?” His hands run up and over his skin, John swallows down a hard lump in his throat. "What can I do, to make you see that?"

“But how does it matter?,” Sherlock challenges, voice brought down to a whisper, trembling. The words rush out in a heavy rush of breath, as though Sherlock’s been holding it in the entire time. His body softens in his hand, all signs of aggression and venom gone. Like an animal that’s been captured and has given up the fight.

He looks down, eyes screwed shut as if he’s trying to control his shaking. Hands form into a fist at his side, and that’s exactly when John can feel his heart breaking.

“Sherlock—”

“You’re still going leave, and what am I going to do then?”

Silence. John can feel the thudding of his own heartbeat against his chest.

He has no answer, because he doesn’t know how to convey to Sherlock the entire implausibility of his leaving. Sherlock has absolutely no idea of the pull he has on him, John could walk out the flat and he’d feel it, spiraling down to his feet. He’d be able to feel his absence just as clearly as the earth would feel the absence of the sun. he wishes he could say it, but John is just as terrified of his own feelings as Sherlock is.

Staying away from Sherlock for four months and John was barely keeping himself together, as if John could just leave.

Mycroft’s eyes, careful and guarded. Rare, but it’s been known to happen.

He presses their lips together, hard, bruising. Sherlock inhales sharply through his nose, John can feel his entire body tremble.

And suddenly the kiss is frantic and desperate, Sherlock tears out of his grasp and claws his fingers into John’s shirt, pushing up and against him. John has to balance himself on the balls of his feet to kiss him properly, catches his lip between his teeth and pulls. Mouths falling open, their tongues twist together and there’s the sudden edge of teeth, sharp and begging.

“Stop pushing me away,” John says raggedly against his mouth. “Let me help.” Pulls Sherlock away from the table by his hips only to push him harder against it. Fingers find the soft skin above his waistband, dig into it hard enough to bruise. The hollow at the center of his chest reaches eagerly for Sherlock, as if he could pull him inside and keep him there, right next to his heart. Sherlock twists beneath him, trying to press himself against John.
“I don’t need a keeper,” he says, low enough to be a growl. His mouth at John’s ear, his lips close around the shell and suck. John feels the points of his teeth pull roughly. The pressure travels straight to his cock, he presses harder against Sherlock’s thigh.

“Keeper?” he repeats, incredulously, almost laughing. “God, as if anything less than an army could keep you.” He rucks his shirt up, hands pressing against his stomach, ribs, thumbs brush against peaked nipples.

“You’re going to try to fix me,” Sherlock argues, breath hitching when John closes his mouth around one.

“I want you to get better,” John rejoins, and licks up his neck. Sherlock’s leg hooks around his waist, pulls him closer. John slips a hand under his thigh, keeps it there so he can thrust against him at a more effective angle. He finds it, Sherlock moans, high pitched.

“Don’t leave,” he says, and it sounds like a discovery and a plea, all at once. “I’ll try, I’ll try, I promise.”

John nods his assent, cups a hand at the back of his nape and noses down his throat. “What do you want?”

He means it in a more holistic kind of way, something along the lines of their presumed relationship. But Sherlock just replies, “fingers” and that sort of does it for John. Suddenly all he wants is to fuck Sherlock right there, the Alpha in him preening at the sudden attention from an omega, and more importantly, Sherlock’s begging tone. Who’s he kidding?

He pushes Sherlock’s leg down, grabs him by the hips and turns him around roughly, pins him against the rim of the table. The entire table shakes, John can faintly hear the tinkle of chemistry equipment past the rushing of blood in his ears. Sherlock’s fingers spread out against the wood, supporting himself on his palms.

It’s new, Sherlock being rendered incapable of speech. Especially since he hasn’t touched him like this in ages. His back arches, arse rubbing against John’s crotch, pushing back and forth, mimicking the rhythm of penetrative sex- humping, almost, like teenagers- and John nearly loses it. Could pull down his pyjamas and take him right there, if only Sherlock would stop doing that.

“Stop,” he chokes out, putting a hand on the small of back to still him. “Or I’m going to come.”

“Good, do it on top of me,” Sherlock says breathlessly, and Jesus, what? Does he even know when he says things like that?

John doesn’t reply to that, he could, obviously, it would barely take him three quick pulls. But instead he pushes down his pyjamas, past the swell of his arse, and fuck, John is only human.

Sherlock is already wet, very wet for an omega not in heat and John doesn’t take his time- he will, later. He’ll be slow and gentle, if Sherlock wants, whatever he wants. He pushes a finger in, meets barely any resistance. Sherlock keens in response, his finger nails scrabbling against the wood.

“Is this okay?” John asks, pulling off his dressing gown and throwing it over the table. “Tell me if it’s too much.”

“Shut up and- more, please,” Sherlock says in reply, reaching out an arm behind him and wrapping fingers against John’s wrist, pushing him further inside. “God, more, John-”
Sherlock arches even further, curving his body into positions that make John question Sherlock's flexibility. Arse up and pushing greedily against John's fingers, hot and slick against his skin. John reaches out a hand and cups a shoulder, pushes him down against the wood and adds in another finger. Sherlock gasps shortly, it melts into a moan when John moves his fingers. In and out, a steady rhythm. Sherlock gushes, and the sight of it wraps around John's lizard brain and squeezes, eclipses out every other coherent thought.

God, last time was nothing like this. It's like holding a candle to burning fire, cackling and spitting and licking, deliciously painful, just on the border of too much.

John crooks his fingers sharply and Sherlock mewls, his arms flail and the mugs go flying, tumble over the edge of the table one after another, chasing each other to their sad demise. Lukewarm tea splatters both their feet.

"What a waste," John comments, and he's got three fingers inside now, sliding easily in and out of Sherlock. Less like fingering and more accurately like fucking, the rough and ceaseless tempo of it.

"I liked the blue one," Sherlock pants, reaching for himself. John knocks his hand out of the way and instead weaves their fingers together. Sherlock brings their enjoined hands to his mouth, finds Johns finger and slips his lips around it. *Fuck.*

Sucks greedily, moans around them. John's arm starts to cramp but he doesn't really give a shit, not when Sherlock is the sexiest fucking thing he's ever *seen*, when he smells like he's been fucked for days and now he's got his fingers inside him, Sherlock clenching around him each time he twists his fingers inside.

John's wet down to his wrist now, and he can feel Sherlock trembling. Shaking, right on the edge. "That's it," he says, encouraging. "Beautiful, Sherlock. God, I missed you."

The edge of teeth on his finger, Sherlock biting down. He slips John's fingers wetly out of his mouth and says, "Missed you- missed you too-" his breath hitches on the last word, tumbles towards a moan as Sherlock spasms against his hand, muscles tighten. "Oh-"

Two more thrusts and Sherlock is coming, plastering himself to John's front and leaking all over his crotch. Come drips on the floor, it must be mixing with the tea- but who cares? John slips out his hand and grabs Sherlock's hips, pulls him against his body and smears his mouth against the back of his neck, scenting and sniffing. Wants his scent all over Sherlock. Want people to smell him and know from miles that he's taken, that he's John's - and *wait, what?*

Both of them breathing hard, Sherlock's hands resting in a puddle of tea. They don't talk for several long seconds, John's erection starts to soften. Sherlock weakly reaches a hand behind himself, pats along his crotch, but John pushes it away gently.

"We've made a mess," Sherlock observes, breaking the silence. He sounds absolutely broken.

John feathers another kiss under his ear, right on the sharp edge of his jaw. "Worth it."

***

He makes Sherlock sit down while he mops up the mess, picks up the shards of broken mug and throws them into the bin under the sink. All the filthy evidence lost, except for the smell. John thinks they should air it out, it might draw sleazy Alphas from the streets and if that happens John isn't going to be responsible for his actions.

"That's the last of it," he says, snapping the lid shut. Washes his hands at the sink. Sherlock is quiet,
barely a word spoken over the last twenty minutes.

John turns around to regard him, and Sherlock looks up at him. His expression doesn't betray anything, his eyes are still bright. A bruise blossoms high and pink on his throat, right over his pulse. "Hey," he calls, softly. "You alright?"

"I wish I could show you," he answers almost immediately. "the inside of my head. It's so loud in there, sometimes I can barely think. If you could hear it, you'd know. It never stops."

John blinks at him, his throat closing. "What?" He laughs nervously, his heart fluttering.


"And me? What do I do?"

John is not stupid, he understands addiction and he knows that candid confessions or even sex over a dining table isn't the answer to all their problems. He's seen Sherlock high and he can see what the months have done to him, the dark shadows under his eyes and the marks on his arms and the bones that jut out from his body;his twitchy movements and shaking fingers. It hurts John, will hurt him even when Sherlock isn't there and he's terrified, because even when he has Sherlock right next to him, it would be so easy for Sherlock to drift away from him. John doesn't know if he's strong enough to keep him anchored, if anything less than an iron chain could keep him here.

Sherlock gets up from his chair, moves gracefully towards John and crowds him against the sink. Eyes like a cat, fierce and terrifying, unimaginably beautiful.

Softly, softly, Sherlock presses his lips to the corner of his mouth.

"You make it go quiet."

John lets Sherlock kiss him then, gentle and sweet, and they hold on to each other. Sherlock makes it sound like it’s enough, like John could make it stop by the sheer fact of his existence.

John desperately hopes he’s enough

***

"You can’t be serious."

"No, of course not."

***

"Was it awful?" John asks, referring to the heat. Sherlock looks up at from where he’s curled on the sofa, head in John’s lap.

He grimaces. "I ran out of suppressants almost four months ago, I should have done something then. I’ve been taking them for years, my cycle should have been less frequent. Besides, they’re affected by the drugs. I thought it wouldn’t happen until next year."

"Were you- were you scared?"

Sherlock turns over, shifts in his lap, eyes caught in the fireplace. "No," he replies quietly. "Just lonely."
John didn’t know what loneliness was, not until he’d met Sherlock.

* How is he? 
* MH
* Better.

PS please don’t expect me to sign my texts, I’m not as much of a ponce as you

I seldom expect such things from you, John.

MH

* Thank you.
* MH

* “You have absolutely nothing in your fridge,” John comments, bending at the knee and squinting at the contents. A half empty carton of milk, some raspberries, a few eggs.

“Hmmm?” Sherlock is bent over some sort of assignment, barely registers John’s speech. He’d been informed that his assignments made up 75% of his grade and if he didn’t submit them on time, he’d fail his course. His handwriting is awful, more of a scrawl than anything else. John thinks it’s probably because the speed of Sherlock’s thoughts can barely keep up with his hand.

He seems calmer. Marginally. His eyes don’t dart wildly, his fingers are still.

“I said,” he repeats, holding up the carton of milk to the light. A month past its expiration date. No wonder the tea tasted odd. He shakes his head, bins the carton. “You do realise you’re going to starve if you don’t, you know. Eat something. And you’ve got nothing substantial in your fridge.” Sherlock is still ignoring him, bent over the paper, curls brushing over his forehead. “Sherlock!” John insists more loudly and finally he looks up, slightly annoyed.

“Yes, I’m aware. Mrs. Hudson usually stocks up on groceries and adds it to the rent. She’s been busy, I think. Her sister was here for a while.” He shrugs. “Mycroft used to send me food sometimes, but I kept giving it away to the homeless so he stopped.”

John opens his mouth to say something, probably shout at Sherlock, but Sherlock’s already signaled the end of the conversation by turning back to his work. Any other time John would have been glad Sherlock was concentrating on something constructive, but he’d prefer it if Sherlock took his lack of sustenance seriously.

“I’ve been sober for three days,” Sherlock informs him suddenly, without looking up. Again with that uncanny ability to read his mind. “Since the last time you’ve been here. If you were wondering. I’ve been sober.”

John breaks out into a smile, even though Sherlock can’t see it. He’s steadfastly not looking at John.
He’s not really working either, his pen’s just clasped between his fingers and Sherlock is tapping it against the table vigorously. John wants to kiss him, burst into effusive praise and maybe buy him some flowers, but instead he quietens himself down. “That’s good, Sherlock. That’s...that’s really good. Yeah. I’m glad.”

Sherlock doesn’t say anything, but he finally looks up and graces John with a smile before writing again.

“I, uh-” John scratches the back of his head. “I could buy us- you- some groceries. And- I was thinking...make us some dinner, maybe?”

He doesn’t know if this is overstepping, if this is going too fast for Sherlock. Sherlock doesn’t give much of a response, merely hums. “Biscuits,” he reminds him absentmindedly.

Sherlock wants biscuits. Jammy Dodgers again? He doesn’t really know what biscuits Sherlock likes. Suddenly the trip to Tesco seems more like a medieval quest. Bringing home provisions for a prince likely to throw a tantrum. He can almost imagine it, Sherlock’s wrinkled nose, holding up an unfamiliar brand dubiously, already deciding to make an offer of it to some poor homeless sod.

“Biscuits, right.”

Sherlock hums again, and John takes his leave. Shoves his wallet into his pocket and picks up his jacket from where it was discarded on the sofa. He glances behind himself, just once, because he can’t resist. The fire cackling, the flat warm. Windows closed to shut out the icy air, the scratch of Sherlock’s pen against paper and the low rumble of his voice as he whispers equations to himself.

***

Sherlock is asleep on the sofa by the time he comes back.

Curled up in the knit blanket that’s usually draped along the back of the furniture. John is careful to shut the door quietly, handles the plastic bags with care because he doesn’t want the crinkle to wake Sherlock up.

The blanket is pulled up to his mouth, so only the riot of curls that nestles on the top of his head and Sherlock’s closed eyes are visible. Dark crescent shapes against ivory skin, dark lashes like smudges of ink against parchment. Sherlock’s slender form under the blanket, rising and falling gently with his breaths.

John’s heart catches in his chest.

The flat is dark because the evening is settling in, and Sherlock’s skin is a sliver of pale moonlight. Christ.

John steps carefully out of the sitting room and into the kitchen, deposits the bags on the table. He’s nearly out of cash now, he might have to beg his mum to send him a cheque. He grimaces. Ah well, maybe not. He can make do. Besides, he’d rather survive on ready-made noodles and the occasional banana rather than Sherlock starving to death and surviving on tea and nicotine.

Since Sherlock has an empty kitchen anyway. Most of the cabinets are unstocked. He finds other stuff though, iodine and penicillin and old test tubes. He relegates them to one cabinet and keeps the others empty for actual food. It’s quick work, he doesn’t really have to think much about it. Pasta. Noodles. Rice. Vegetables in the crisper. He briefly considers cleaning out the fridge with bleach, there are Tupperware boxes stacked in the upper shelf filled with something decidedly non edible. He doesn’t touch that one, instead lines the rest of the fridge with food. He’s bought way too many
biscuits, wasn’t sure which ones Sherlock would like. Probably gone overboard on the chocolate digestives. At least he knows Sherlock will eat the Jaffa Cakes.

“John?”

John’s hand still where they are poised to store frozen peas in the freezer. He looks up. He can hear the creak of the springs as Sherlock moves about on the sofa. The little noise Sherlock makes as he yawns.

He hurriedly puts the peas inside and shuts the fridge. Seems like the last of it. Wiping his damp hands on his jeans he ducks out of the kitchen to see Sherlock sitting up, rubbing the heels of his hands against his eyes.

“How long have you been gone?” he asks around another yawn. With a huff he falls back against the cushions.

John doesn’t even try to stop the fond smile from curling across his mouth. “A few hours. I didn’t know what you’d like.” He strides towards the sofa and picks up a cushion that’s fallen to the ground, throws it on top of the the armchair. Right, *that* armchair.

Sherlock makes a noise of enormous disgust. “Ugh, groceries. Groceries are boring.” He stretches right there, all feline grace and movement, his back arching, toes curling. The blanket drags along the floor, Sherlock’s socked feet brushing against the edge of the sofa.

John swallows and looks away, tries to concentrate on the orange glow of the lamp.

“Did you get biscuits?” Sherlock asks, his words still slurred. John laughs, looking down at him. Sherlock’s eyes, still half hooded from sleep, regarding him softly.

“Jesus, yeah, I got you your biscuits. Lots and lots of biscuits, incidentally.”

“Good,” Sherlock replies, sounding satisfied. He runs a hand through his hair, which is already sticking up every which way from his long nap. The knit pattern has been embedded into the right side of his cheek.

John can’t resist, not kissing Sherlock right now would be a crime. He’s so soft and pliant, his lips still warm. His body still trying to wake itself up, even his mind running at one fourth of its usual speed. It’s a slow, languorous kiss, and Sherlock makes a soft noise of agreement. “Mmm, what was that for?” he asks, when John pulls him away. One slender finger traces the bottom of his swollen lip. John wants to catch it between his teeth.

“Just,” John shrugs. “You looked nice.”

As explanations go, it’s woefully pragmatic, and also a complete lie. Sherlock raises one dark eyebrow, unconvinced. “You do have such a way with words, John,” he drawls lazily. He stretches again and this time John watch as his shirt rides up, his eyes fixed on the pale stretch of luminous skin. Sherlock always looks so undeniably romantic, like something out of a Byronic novel, like a character composed out of a sonnet. If he was a good poet, he’d fucking write a sonnet on Sherlock.

“Did you- ah, finish your assignment?”

Sherlock scowls at him. “No,” he grouses. “I fell asleep. And you weren’t here. It was...distracting. Don’t leave next time.”

“Distracting?” John raises an eyebrow.
Sherlock looks flustered, all of a sudden. He fixes John with a withering look. “No need to look quite so pleased with yourself.” He throws the blanket off his body, full-strop mode. Ignores John completely in favour of walking towards the kitchen. His t-shirt is wrinkled at the back, and god, does Sherlock really need to stretch so much? Maybe he should get longer t-shirts. Maybe John should push him against the wall and snog him senseless, would really teach the prat-

“You...you really did quite a bit of shopping.” Refrigerator open, Sherlock’s eyes wide at the array of colourful vegetables and cold cuts.

“Too much?” John asks, suddenly worried. “I mean, you really didn’t have anything to eat. And you’re losing weight.”

Sherlock looks alarmed and takes a cursory glance at his body. “I didn’t notice. It’s probably because I’ve gone off suppressants, I’ll get my normal weight back when I start taking them again.”

John doesn’t want him to start taking them again, he’s going to miss Sherlock’s clear scent. He’ll press his nose to the side of the neck and only smell the clinical, sugary scent of chemicals. Still, he knows it’s selfish and he wants Sherlock to stay safe so he keeps quiet.

Sherlock picks up a packet of cigarettes from the dining table and lights one off the hob. Bending low in front of the stove, hands resting against the counter as he ducks his head, holds the cigarette close to the flame with his mouth. It lights up, Sherlock straightens and takes a drag, blows it towards the window.

“Is dinner still on?” Sherlock looks hopeful. “I’m...hungry.” He looks surprised with his statement. Runs his fingers down his stomach as though in sympathy.

John rolls his eyes. “Of course you’re hungry.” He pushes Sherlock out of the way and opens the cabinets, lowers down a packet of pasta. “Have you eaten anything all day?”

“I had some tea in the morning. And Ms. Hudson made me toast.” He hovers behind John, hot breath against the back of his neck, it disturbs the hair that curls around John’s ears.

“That was almost twelve hours ago. Do you have a pot?”

“Er...a pot?” Sherlock repeats nervously.

“Sherlock, what on earth do you survive on? Yes, a pot. Do you have one?”

Sherlock starts rummaging through the kitchen. “We could ask Mycroft to have a pot delivered. What kind of pot would you like?”

“Really, you won’t let your brother send you vegetables but you’ll call him to deliver a pot.”

“He should make himself useful.” Something clatters, the clink of steel. Sherlock emerges with something that would barely pass muster as a pot. It’s a bit rusted. But he holds it up in clear triumph, so John grins and takes it from him.

“Very nice, Sherlock. Excellent job.” He doesn’t expect Sherlock to flush at the praise. Interesting.

“What are you going to make?” he asks, as if changing the subject, his voice curious. It’s odd, to see Sherlock like that. Usually he’s always bristling at the edges, vibrating with energy or want. Now he’s quiet, the pulse of his body tuned down to a quiet hum. John doesn’t know which Sherlock he likes more; he could fuck the first one into the mattress. This Sherlock though, soft and blurred around the edges, he wants to kiss him in front of the fire until he’s gasping, twine their fingers
together.

“John?”

“Oh- uh,” he blinks away the image and instead busies himself with filling the pot with water.

“Spaghetti. Is that okay?”

Sherlock wrinkles his nose. “What sort of spaghetti?”

“Don’t be a prat. Can you get out of the kitchen, maybe? You’re distracting me, breathing all over my neck. Go and- I don’t know, conduct an experiment or something. Watch telly.”

“Telly,” Sherlock hisses like a cat and spits the word out like in disgust. “Who on earth watches telly.”

“Most of the world’s population,” John answers. “All the ordinary, simple minded folk like me.”

A few seconds pass. “You’re not ordinary,” Sherlock mumbles, his voice barely audible, and leaves the kitchen before John can reply.

He can hear Sherlock switching on the telly, falling into the sofa, lounging on it more like. He wonders if Sherlock will ever sit the right way up in furniture. He’s too tall for the sofa anyway, his ankles hang off the edge. Almost immediately Sherlock starts complaining about the channels.

“God, I hate crime shows. What kind of rubbish is this, only an idiot would commit murder like that.”

You’re not ordinary.

Sherlock’s low voice, the rumble of the television melts into the background as John cooks. Tomatoes, garlic, butter, he hasn’t made spaghetti in a while. Hasn’t cooked for anyone in a while either. It’s probably the first time he’s eating a proper meal in weeks.

You’re not ordinary, Sherlock says. John smiles.

***

The smell of frying garlic draws Sherlock from sitting room, like a hungry and hopeful dog. The pasta is simmering. He looks bored to tears.

“Sherlock, what—”

“Shh,” Sherlock says, stands in front of him and gracefully drops to his knees.

“Oh,” John says when Sherlock flicks open the buttons of his jeans. “Okay.” His wooden spoon clatters to the floor and flicks them both with bits of sauce. Long, slender fingers pulling down his pants, Sherlock’s soft lips close around his cock.

He sucks him till he comes in his mouth, there’s barely any choice in the matter, John has no time to control himself. Sherlock makes little choking noises when John thrusts in too fast and god, that is just so hopelessly hot, he doesn’t even feel guilty. One hand buried in Sherlock’s hair, tugging, one hand flailing, it brings down a plate to the floor. Sherlock ignores it, laps up his come like a cat, looks up at him and fucking bats his eyelashes, and then gets up and walks away without so much as a “you’re welcome.”

John is left holding on to the kitchen counter for dear life, chest rising and falling rapidly, the world
spinning. The image of Sherlock on his knees, eyes watering, a trickle of come sliding down from the corner of his mouth etched into his mind.

The water starts boiling.

***

The eat on the sofa, Sherlock sprawls, one leg on John’s lap and the other bent at an impossible angle so it’s on the coffee table. A lewd 60 degree angle that doesn’t look comfortable at all but Sherlock looks perfectly content, shoveling forkfuls of spaghetti into his mouth. John’s own legs stretched to rest next to Sherlock, their toes touching.

The channel is turned on to National Geographic. A lioness stalks her prey, a slender gazelle. Follows her stealthily, the gazelle has no idea. Once or twice she looks up, ears and nose twitching, instinct letting her her know that danger is nearby. The lioness jumps out of what seems like nowhere, the gazelle barely had a chance. One quick bite to the jugular, she sinks her teeth in holds on and the animal struggles pitifully before succumbing.

“Good?” John asks.

Sherlock hums around a mouthful of food. There’s a little marinara sauce at the corner of his lip.

“Lionesses remain playful even as adults, did you know that? I suppose male lions have a false sense of propriety.”

“I...I didn’t know that.”

“You can scratch that from the vast list you have, then. Wouldn’t make much of a difference, though one can try.” He giggles at his own joke even as John gives him a playful shove with his foot.

Sherlock pushes away his empty plate, scraped clean, and reaches for the glass of cheap wine John had poured him. John’s already had three glasses and he’s starting to feel a little fuzzy. He doesn’t know how much Sherlock has had, but he’s pretty sure he has more tolerance than him. Or does he? He watches Sherlock drain the rest of his glass and reach for the bottle. Instead of pouring it he brings it his mouth and takes a dainty sip.

“This is awful,” he pronounces, and proceeds to empty it.

“Hey!” John admonishes him, and snatches the bottle. “Don’t finish it.”

“Don’t be absurd. You should be leaping at the opportunity to get me drunk.” Suddenly Sherlock is climbing on top of John, the bony points of his knees pressing into to the softness of John’s stomach. John tries to push away from him, tries to press himself to the back of the sofa. Sherlock is determined, and suddenly he’s caged by Sherlock’s arms which effectively trap him from either side.

“Why?” John asks.

Sherlock plucks the wine from his hand and drains the rest of it, probably one glass’s worth. He lets the bottle slip from his fingers, it falls on the carpet with a dull thud. He hopes it doesn’t stain.

He still doesn’t answer his question. Instead he ducks his head and presses a hard, close mouthed kiss against his lips. It surprises John, especially when Sherlock lowers himself down and tucks his head beneath John’s chin, sinewy arms coming to rest at his hips.

“Sherlock..” John whispers. Sherlock snuffles further against his chest in response.
John’s hand cups the back of head protectively. Inky curls cushion the press of his palm, Sherlock’s warm breath comes in gentle huffs against his throat.

“Sherlock, can I ask you something?”

He runs his fingers along the raised ridge of Sherlock’s spine, the thin material of his ragged t-shirt a regrettable barrier between their skin.

Sherlock hums his assent. Still awake then. He tips his head up so it’s resting on his shoulder instead, his lips are pressed against the stubble on his chin.

“You said you’ve been sober for a while, now.” Sherlock stills, John can feel it. His breaths stutter. “Why?”

Sherlock shifts so he’s sitting up, it’s a slow movement, John can tell Sherlock’s drunkenness is making him sluggish. Still, he sits up, and John’s hands rest on his hips, Sherlock straddles him. God, how many times times has John fantasised this way? Sherlock on top of just like this, only in the fantasy Sherlock’s hips are moving in a far more suggestive fashion.

“What do you mean?”

Firelight makes shadows flicker against his pale skin, they nestle in the hollows of his eyes, the dips of his collarbones. His eyes are silver lights in the dark.

John shrugs, his thumbs find the bare skin under his t shirt, rubs circles. “I just...I wanted to know, if...”

“I hate it when you’re disappointed with me,” Sherlock confesses, sounding like he’s on the verge of a pout, he sounds almost childishly upset. “You make that awful face, and I...I can’t stand it. I’ve never cared before. I disappoint Mycroft all the time, made a habit of it. Even Lestrade, but he’s not as tiresome as Mycroft, he’s still nice to me because he wants me to help him with the cases. But you don’t...I don’t know what you want. You could have had me by now, but you haven’t, which leads me to think there could be something else involved. But it’s all only hypothetical. I—” his eyes lose focus, he squints at John like he’s seeing double. “Am woefully ignorant in this area.”

John’s hands slide up under his shirt, his hands passing over the rise and fall of his ribs. Sherlock’s breath hitches. He pushes himself up so he’s not lying down anymore and they’re facing each other, Sherlock still in his lap. He kisses the spot just under his jaw, can feel Sherlock’s pulse thrumming under his mouth.

Sherlock sighs softly, fingers cupping John’s shoulders. He tips his head towards the ceiling, lets John mouth along the side of his throat. “I’m sorry,” John whispers.

“For what?” Sherlock swallows thickly.

“Everything.”

John’s teeth find the bump of a collarbone, he bites down on it. Sherlock’s hips shift restlessly, they grind down on John’s crotch.

Sherlock claws his fingers into John’s shirt, pulls him against himself and down, until John is on top of him. Long legs wrap around his waist, cant upwards. Sherlock wraps his arms around John’s shoulders, his chin inches upwards in hopeful anticipation of a kiss.

John obliges, because he couldn’t not kiss him, Sherlock’s mouth is utterly perfect and John could
kiss him for hours.

“Can I ask you something else?” he asks. Sherlock licks at his lips, nods. John knows he’s being greedy, taking advantage of Sherlock’s inebriated condition by asking questions he knows he wouldn’t answer otherwise, he’s being selfish and he knows it. But Sherlock is so closed off all the time, all hard lines and angular planes and now they’ve all melted into softness and Sherlock has suddenly become transformed into some warm, pliant thing that John wants to push into.

He lifts himself up, rests his weight on his palms. Sherlock hooks a finger into a gap between his buttons.

“Are you sad?”

Sherlock blinks up at him. Silver eyes, pale like moonlight, constantly changing colours. Sometimes soft, sometimes hard and glinting, it’s like being caught in the eye of a storm, you never know where it could take you.

“Yes,” he answers, and it’s like a secret, a heavy weight passed into the air. John has a feeling Sherlock has never told this to anyone. “But not now,” he quickly assures John. “Sometimes I try not to think about it...it comes back, though. It always does.” Spidery fingers climb up John’s neck, Sherlock doesn’t meet his eyes. “It’s awful, being so sad all the time.”

“I don’t want you to be sad,” John says desperately, and kisses Sherlock hard. Sherlock’s back arches, his legs clamp tighter around John and he pushes his hips upwards, seeking friction.

“Me neither, god, me neither.” Sherlock stretches his neck, chin raised so his throat is bared and John doesn’t know if the act of submission is done consciously or not. Still, his skin is flushed pink and John runs his nose along his neck, scenting. Sherlock squirms underneath him, his breaths leaving his mouth in quick staccato bursts.

“I could make you happy,” John babbles. He’s not sure what possesses him to say it, he could blame it on the wine. He smothers Sherlock’s lips with his own, Sherlock kisses back, his erection pressed against John’s hip, leaking at the tip. If John slipped his fingers under his waistband, below the plush curve of his arse, Sherlock would probably be wet there too. Fuck.


He moans into his mouth, low and pornographic, and does Sherlock even know he’s doing that? John bites down on his lip and his hips stutter, their low and steady rutting disrupted. “Could you- could you.. ah…” Words melt into meaningless vowels when John pulls down his pyjamas and wraps a hand around his cock. Pretty and pink, gushing at the head, it’s gorgeous. John would take him into his mouth if he was a little more co-ordinated.

John’s name falls from his lips around a rough moan, Sherlock whimpers when John brushes the tip with his thumb. “Keep doing that,” he encourages him breathlessly. John can feel his toes curling and pressing into the small of his back.

Sherlock thrashes about under the weight of his body, trying to fuck into the channel of John’s fingers. His lips are red from the unforgiving edge of his teeth, his fingers find John’s hair and pull. “God what are you doing .”

It takes all of John’s energy not to just flip him over and-

“You could, you could, if you wanted,” Sherlock tells him, his voice ragged.
Shit, did he say that out loud? Or Sherlock just know what he was thinking like he always does?

“Do you want to?” John applies enough pressure and Sherlock gasps, tucking his head into the crook of his neck to stifle his moans. His body tremulous, shuddering and shaking, right on the tip of an orgasm.

“Yes,” he whispers. “So..so much, I’d be so good, John, you should-”

John swallows, his hips press against where they have Sherlock pinned to the sofa. He could, Christ, it would be so easy, he imagines pushing into Sherlock’s trembling body right now, he’d already be wet enough, he smells divine, rich and gorgeous and streaked with John’s own scent, it’s enough to drive him wild. Sherlock, begging and pleading and promising to be so good, John, he could come just thinking from it.

But he can’t fuck Sherlock now, even if he does beg so prettily, because they’re both drunk and so he does the next best thing. Flicks open his own jeans with one hand and then pushes Sherlock’s arms over his head. Pinned to the arm rest, it turns his wrists sticky with his own come. “Oh,” he gasps, when John presses their cocks together. He looks so surprised, his mouth parted and his eyes wide, as though he’s never felt it before. Cheeks flushed, he bares his throat again almost as though he’s begging John to bite him. God, he would. He’d bond with Sherlock if he wanted. He’d do anything he wanted, really. He licks up the side of neck, gently presses his teeth in, not enough to break skin but to sting. Sherlock immediately jackknifes, wrists twist in his gasp, the bones grind against each other and when he comes against John he does it with his mouth forming his name.

Sherlock is shaking, and John kisses him through it. Three sharp thrusts and he’s ejaculating right on top of his stomach, pushes his shirt up so he can see it streaked across his skin.

“Fuck, John-” he breathes roughly, legs catch him in a vice before they let go, becoming limp. John lets go of his wrists and kisses them, presses his mouth to the underside of them and sniffs. He smells like him now and that annoying, animalistic, Alpha part of his brain purrs in satisfaction. Sherlock is covered in his come and he looks perfect.

He looks tired, but John wants to kiss him, so he does it softly, dry mouthed, gentle. Sherlock hums contentedly, snakes his arms around John’s shoulders and noses his throat.

The fire burns low now, so that most of the room is dark. Sherlock’s face sheathed in shadows like soot stained fingers caressing his skin. He tucks his face beneath John’s chin so that his mouth is pressed to his pulse. Slow and steady, Sherlock can probably feel his heartbeat.

Gently, deliberately, Sherlock weaves their fingers together, the gaps of their fingers nestle against each other perfectly.

***
Chapter Summary

*There are no mysterious connections, no way of knowing how the universe functions. Everyone searches for answers and tries to derive some semblance of order from the vast chaos around them and everyone inevitably fails. Sherlock finds no concrete answers, only a vague feeling Ms Hudson calls ‘heart-sickness’.*

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

The days are getting long
The seas are getting rough
And I can't figure it out
Where enough will be enough

The Shaker Hymn, *Sucking it Out*

It doesn’t happen all at once. Nor does it happen immediately afterwards. Sherlock can hardly understand what *it* is, not at first, at least.

The moments are either few or fleeting, or hours and hours.

Sherlock will sit on his sitting room floor, surrounded by files of cold cases he’d stolen from Lestrade’s office last week, and suddenly there will be a flash of *something* in his chest. It squeezes his ribs before it fans outward, until Sherlock is choking on air. Photographs of a forty four year old man with tetrodotoxin poisoning flutters from his grasp, and Sherlock’s hand instead flies to his gut. At first he thinks it is heat, but the feeling is gone within seconds. Panting, he raises shaking fingers to push his hair back from his face, and his fingers come back wet- with tears.

He doesn’t understand it- why he should feel so empty. Not the desperate, wanton emptiness that befalls him every couple of months, but something more hollow and quiet, it makes Sherlock impossibly sad every time he sits on his armchair and remembers the ghost of fingers against his ankles.
One day in class Sherlock was doodling on a scrap piece of paper, seated right in the farthest row, and he felt impossibly dizzy. His neck twitched uncomfortably, as though he’d had an injury, and right after that John’s laugh rumbled in his ears. His hands clenched around his pen, almost breaking the plastic in half. It’s not fair, he thought.

He felt angry. The injustice is still stifling.

Sherlock had given up the one good thing he had in his life and the universe is still set upon punishing him.

***

Sherlock doesn’t remember the last time he was sober for more than a few hours.

Isn’t it so much easier to piece together evidence when his synapses are firing, making connections quicker than he could normally? Everyone should be happy- Sherlock’s solving cases. Helping people. He even submitted his last assignment on time. He’d been to all his classes. Why isn’t anyone proud of him?

It’s so much easier this way. Sherlock can find a dozen more things to concentrate on. He solved sixteen cold cases in a week, flew into Lestrade’s office grinning, feeling absolutely buoyant. He dropped all the files on his desk- thump, thump, thump. Lestrade hadn’t even looked at them.

Fingers tap against his desk, once, twice. “Get out,” he finally says.

Sherlock frowns at him, confused. Surely Lestrade hadn’t misunderstood what this whole display had been about? He sniffs, self consciously rubs his arm. Then he leans forward and pats a dossier on top. “I solved it. The brother did it.”

He keeps patting it, restless energy making his palm flutter all over the files. He points out all the evidence, deduces each case to the tiniest detail. He is breathless at the end of it, the back of his neck damp. He looks expectantly at Lestrade, expecting the familiar paternal chuckle, the exasperated fondness, a pat on the head even. He does that because he knows Sherlock detests it.

Instead he just stares at him, and there’s nothing in his eyes but disappointment. Sherlock feels
furious. He feels like picking up that damn paper weight on his desk and throwing it at him. He leans over the desk, trying to intimidate him. Fingers clench the edge of the wood until his knuckles are white. Good, that’s good, because otherwise Sherlock’s fingers would be shaking uncontrollably for no reason at all.

“These cases have been festering in your cabinet for months, all of them so blindingly and glaringly obvious that a five year old could solve it in their sleep. I didn’t know you were quite so inept, it really is a surprise to be proved wrong. And here I’ve gone and done you another favour— a favour that I do for you constantly, it’s possibly the only thing that keeps your bloody career afloat. What. Is. Your. Problem?”

He bangs the desk at the end, and even though the sound makes him flinch, it has no visible effect on Lestrade. Instead, all he does is take an enormous sigh, and run his fingers through his greying hair. “Charming,” he tells him, dead pan. “Really, Sherlock. Thank you for salvaging my career.”

He’s being sarcastic. “Platitudes, Gavin?” he sneers. “Do you think I’m one of your children?”

“You’re acting like a child,” he points out. “Where’s John?”

Sherlock rears back, as though he’s been hit. It feels like a slap in the face. Suddenly the hollow in his chest opens again, the ravaged, frayed edges of it stinging, raw and bloody. Something heavy presses down on his chest, and his world spins for a moment. He loses his footing for a second and has to grab on to a chair to steady himself. Immediately Lestrade leaps out of his chair and grabs him by the shoulders, helps him to stand straight. Sherlock opens his mouth to say something, but instead he retches. Pushes Lestrade away and bends over in half, covering his mouth with a hand to prevent himself from covering the linoleum with sick. Although his vomit would not be the filthiest thing to fall on the floor of an NSY office.

“You look like shit, you idiot.”

Sherlock groans and his hands fly over his ears, he pushes them against his head until it feels like he’s about to explode. Someone is pushing him down by the shoulders until his bottom hits soft leather.

“Sherlock?” Lestrade’s voice is muffled. He considers removing his hands but is met with the possibility of hearing John’s voice in his head again. He screws his eyes shut, starts reciting the periodic table under his breath.
“Sherlock, what-”

Sherlock is aching, doesn’t anybody realise? Everything hurts, all over, and he wants- he wants. Sherlock has never wanted anything so much before, and why on earth can’t he have it? Is he really so awful? So undeserving?

Yes, he thinks. Because the prospect of John coming back to him fills him with fear. All the rotten, ugly things inside of him will latch on to John and he will ruin John- all of his smiles and his blue eyes and his stupid jumpers. Sherlock will take and take from him until there’s nothing left, or John will see that Sherlock is suited for only one kind of thing and leave him.

His mouth pants open in a sob, and his head immediately finds the soft, pillowy landing of Lestrade’s gut. A hand cups the back of his head, strokes through his curls. “Sherlock-?”

Sherlock shakes his head and tries to control his dry heaving. He breathes in great lungfuls of Lestrade’s scent; it’s all wrong, of course, but he is an Alpha, a non-threatening one that Sherlock trusts and just for a few seconds, it’s almost comforting.

“Alright, kid, that’s it. It’ll be okay. Come now, how about a cuppa? How’s that sound?” His voice is soft, placating. It should grate on his nerves. Instead Sherlock laps it up like he’s a child in need of comforting. It works. Just a little bit, it works.

He misses John, and it hurts, and why won’t it stop?

Finally he pulls away and finds that his face is wet with tears again. Wordlessly, Lestrade hands him a handkerchief and discreetly turns away, rummaging in his disorganised cabinet for PG tips. Sherlock’s heart is still stuttering inside his chest, his lungs feeling squeezed of air. There’s a burning around the back of his neck and when he brushes a hand against his skin, his scent gland twinges every so slightly. It probably doesn’t mean anything, but for some reason Sherlock holds on to the fact like an anchor. Does that mean John is thinking of him? Or possibly his body had recognised John as a potential mate and was mourning his absence?

“So,” Lestrade finally says, his voice deceptively light and airy. Sherlock would have scowled if he was in a better mood. He’s not an idiot. “Do you feel better?”
Sherlock hums, ducking his head to stare at the floor. He twines the handkerchief round his fingers until it’s like a cast wrapped around his skin. He ought to feel humiliated. Lestrade’s seen him in pretty awful situations, really—once he vomited all over his shoes when he was coming down from a particularly bad high. But he’d never seen him so—like an omega?—a voice whispers in his head. Sherlock manages to pull it out and stuff it an iron box in his mind palace and put it away.

Outside the closed door, someone is shouting, arguing with a police officer. Then there are hushed voices, someone placating. Sobs. Sherlock concentrates on the sound for a few seconds while Lestrade indulgently busies himself with the tea.

“Do you want to tell me what that was about?” he asks after a bit, pointedly. Sherlock’s eyes flick over to him. He doesn’t meet his eyes. He continues to look at the floor, waits for a few beats while his heart starts slowing to normal.

“Not particularly.”

Lestrade hums like he was expecting it, then slides a mug across the desk to him. Ceramic scrapes against wood, the teabag bobs on the surface. Sherlock doesn’t even like PG tips. Vaguely he recalls John getting him a cup of tea when he was working on the serial rapist case.

He takes a sip and makes a face, dramatically enough for Lestrade to notice it. He rolls his eyes.

“There’s a kidnapping case,” he says after a few moments of silence. Sherlock makes an interested noise, raising an eyebrow at him. Lestrade clears his throat.

“Yeah. Kidnapped yesterday, right from her home. Somewhere between six and seven pm, her nanny was asleep on the sofa. By the time she woke up, children were gone. Swears up and down that she’d locked all the doors, windows were closed.”

Sherlock tips his head back and looks at the ceiling. “I thought you didn’t want me to take another case.”

“I changed my mind,” Lestrade answers. “People are allowed to do that.”

Sentiment, Sherlock’s mind supplies, as if in explanation. Lestrade feels bad for him. Pities him, probably. It would help though. When the high wears off, Sherlock knows what will return. And he
doesn’t want to be around for it.

Changing your mind isn’t such an awful thing, is it?

***

None of it makes any sense; so Sherlock tries to find an explanation, because nothing in life is a coincidence. There are no such thing as soul mates; doesn’t everyone meet someone mildly tolerable and choose to settle? There are no mysterious connections, no way of knowing how the universe functions. Everyone searches for answers and tries to derive some semblance of order from the vast chaos around them and everyone inevitably fails. Sherlock finds no concrete answers, only a vague feeling Ms Hudson calls ‘heart-sickness’.

Sherlock’s pathetic heart had found someone who reciprocated warmth and affection, and tried its best to reach for it, make a space next to itself, nestled right underneath its ribs. For the first time in a long time, there was someone who looked at him like he was worthy of looking at and Sherlock had craved it like a drug. It was natural. Perhaps it really was the inevitable pull of biology, and this makes Sherlock impossibly sad. After all, what else could he possibly offer anyone?

He stretches out on his rug and watches the flames crackling and spitting. Warmth spills over his body and Sherlock thinks of the thousands of people all over the world who get their hearts broken everyday; despite them, the world keeps spinning.

And then he scoffs, because he’s Sherlock. What a ridiculous idea. He doesn’t- the emptiness claws at his sides and Sherlock doesn’t feel so sure.

***

Days blur past, become weeks and months. Sherlock finds himself reaching for the tourniquet more rapidly than usual. He gives himself the minimum gap between shooting up to allow his body to metabolise the drug. At least, at first. His professors don’t notice he’s sitting in the back of the class, high as a kite. He can finish work much faster, anyway. It also becomes easier to ignore people, including Sebastian. Sherlock finds a new dealer who splits his stock with him- cocaine, morphine, some LSD, methamphetamine- with him and lets Sherlock sell it after Sherlock had pointed out various disadvantages in his present system of distribution. Sherlock had pointed out six people in one day who would give anything for a few grams but were too frightened to ask for it and managed
to procure something up of 75 pounds for a gram. He knew who would pay almost 20% more than the usual price. Some of them paid double.

Somebody runs a hand up his thigh.

Sherlock startles, turning around in alarm to see who it is. The room is dark, lights switched off because Professor- Mukherjee? Chatterjee? He doesn’t remember- wanted to show them a presentation. Sherlock had happily been using the past few minutes to take a nap in class. He couldn’t sleep back in his flat at Baker Street, for reasons he found difficult to admit to himself.

A girl stares back at him, green eyes wide and weary. A pink tongue runs across her mouth, and she smiles appeasingly at him. Sherlock frowns, eyes flicking down to where her dark, tapered fingers are clasped around his knee. “Hey,” she says.

“What are you doing,” Sherlock whispers back. He can’t recognise her from any of his classes, but then again, he doesn’t recognise anyone. He only knows a handful of people and remembers their names out of sheer convenience. He might have seen her once or twice, but he can’t be too sure. She’s clearly an Omega; Sherlock can smell it on her. Unbonded; not seeing anyone, plays guitar, presumably quite good at it. Platinum chain around her neck but old hand-me-down leather watch and torn jeans say middle class upbringing, but had a wealthy partner a few- weeks?- two months, at most- back.

“Do you want to get out of here?” she asks, and pins her bottom lip with her teeth. The front teeth are slightly crooked. Sherlock wonders what to tell her. He’s not exactly enjoying himself in this class; he’s only attending it because his alternative is to beg Lestrade for another case or get high in the supply cabinet. He wouldn’t mind the latter, but even he knows he needs a few more hours until he can shoot up again.

“You’re attracted to me,” he says instead, and the girl blushes to the roots of her hair.

“I- yeah,” she agrees, the corner of her lips turning up in a smile. How ridiculous. Sherlock should spare her the heartbreak right now, and tell her that he isn’t available. He opens his mouth to say so, but she beats him to it and asks, “We could shoot up. Or something. And maybe...er...hang out?”

The entire uncertain, childish demeanor is obviously an act. She wouldn’t have made a bold grab at his leg otherwise. Sherlock sighs. She only wants the cocaine.

“Fine,” he decides.
An hour, or two hours- maybe? He can’t remember. An inordinate amount of time later he finds himself sprawled on the floor of some filthy flat with a very determined woman on top of him.

“I’m an omega,” he says, as she mouths down his neck. Sherlock has very little experience with women. He’s received the occasional admiration from them, of course, what with them believing he is either a beta or an Alpha on suppressants. He tries to sit up on his palms but he is pushed back down. His head hits hardwood.

Ray- isn’t that what she had said her name was?- starts to take her top off. Sherlock is alarmed. He says as much, he might have even said, “I am alarmed,” but she takes no notice of it. Instead, she crouches over him and grabs his chin with her fingers and says, “Doesn’t matter. I don’t really.” her eyes flutter closed for a moment and she continues, and her words are slurred around the edges. “I really don’t fancy labels.”

Sherlock feels distinctly light headed and the weight on top of him is not helping. She runs a hand down his chest, prods between his legs and is visibly upset to find him still flaccid. This is a new kind of disappointment, he registers. He’s never been so completely uninterested in the proceedings. She makes another face and with a sigh, rolls off of him.

“What a waste,” she murmurs, and rolls to her side so that her nose is pressed against Sherlock’s damp neck.

“I think I’m in love,” he tells her, and it feels odd to say it. Then he says it again. “I think I’m in love.” Again and again. Ray lifts herself on her palms to peer at him. Her pupils are as huge as saucers. She runs a finger down his face, presses in at the base of his throat.

“With me?” she asks. She look suspicious.

“Ah, no,” Sherlock’s heart hammers against his chest. He tries to count the beats but fails. “Someone I just met twice.”

He can feel his fingers twitching at his side. His chest is covered in goosebumps from his open shirt and Sherlock does not feel well at all. He tries to button his shirt but his fingers are shaking too much. Ray offers to help but she can’t do it either and instead mumbles something unintelligible and
closes her eyes.

At some point of time he sits up and vomits all over the floor. Ray, who he had expected to be upset about this, merely stares at the vomit in mild surprise as it leeches across the floor.

“Sorry,” Sherlock mumbles, and leans against a wall, sweaty and shaking.

Something happens after that. He isn’t sure what. His phone rings, and Ray picks it up, and in the middle of the conversation, she passes out. Someone shouts from the other end, he can hear the static. Mycroft’s name flashes from the screen.

“Myc,” Sherlock shouts into the mobile. Crawls over on his hands and knees and peers at the mobile on the floor. “Myc? Myc, Myc, Myc.”

He presses it to his ear. “Mycroft, is that you? God, Mycroft. You were right. Caring isn’t an advantage. It’s a- what do you call it- chemical defect? Hmm. Sounds about right.” Sherlock is aware he’s rambling. He just doesn’t know how to stop. He also feels like he’s burning up and freezing cold, all at the same time.

“Sherlock!” Mycroft says sharply. “Where are you?”

“Dunno,” Sherlock answers truthfully, and hangs up. He lies there next to Ray and his puddle of sick, and thinks of John.

***

Vaguely, he recalls being picked up, hauled out of the flat. It is freezing cold outside and someone puts a coat over his shoulders, bundles it up all around him. Sherlock squints and tries to sniff, but his nose is blocked. "Myc?" he asks.

"Sherlock. Sherlock?" they rap a finger against his cheek and Sherlock blinks in surprise. That was rude. He tells them so. "Rude."

"You utter imbecile," they snap at him, and then Sherlock is sure it is Mycroft. He starts to worry about Ray, with her dark skin and crooked teeth. She was a nice girl. Sherlock feels sad that he couldn't give her what she wanted. Does John feel the same way? Does John even know what Sherlock wants? Perhaps it would be inappropriate of him to tell John. He might find it maudlin and sentimental, and Sherlock abhors sentiment.

"John would be extremely disappointed to see you in this state," he's told, before being bundled into
a car. Did he say all of that out loud? He should stop. It's becoming an abominable habit.

"You'd know, wouldn't you," Sherlock slurs. "Have you ever been in love, Mycroft?"

Mycroft regards him coolly from the rear view mirror and says nothing.

***

Even as a child, Sherlock’s dreams had always been vivid. He’d beg Mycroft to read pirate stories to him before bed so he could manipulate his brain into creating appropriate dreams. Sometimes he succeeded. Mycroft would whine and complain and call Sherlock a child (he was a child, though. He was only six. Mycroft was thirteen and gradually becoming more and more spherical, perhaps his frustration with his ever-widening body made him lash out at Sherlock) but he’d sit beside him on the bed, lean against the headrest and read him something ridiculous and lovely like *The Tales of Blackbeard.*

Sherlock dreams about John often. He sleeps little, because—would it be appropriate to call them nightmares—? Keep coming back. Surges of intense jealousy, John’s eyes looking at him as though he were someone else. A grounding hand at the small of his back, only to disappear into smoke when Sherlock reaches behind to touch it. John smiles at him and Sherlock reaches for him to twist their fingers together, but John just goes further and further away.

He wakes up, aching and shivering. Out of instinct he grabs the blanket that is tangled around his legs and pulls it closer to his chin and curls himself into a foetal position. Knees pressed against his concave stomach, fists held up to his throat. An unforgivable amount of time later he realises the blanket smells all wrong and whips it off his body in disgust. Obviously this only makes him even colder; what with his oversensitive body and his skin and his runny nose and his body that feels nothing short of a moving skeleton.

He sits up and surveys the room he’s in: expensive bedsheets, Egyptian cotton. The quilt that now hangs off the edge of the bed is dark blue fleece. Walls painted a pale cream, gleaming Victorian furniture. All dark wood and polished floors, paintings on the wall that might be described as ‘tasteful’ in some circles but which Sherlock has little patience for. They’re only colours, they’re not even beautiful. A half naked women with a pained expression, eyes misshapen and yellow hand pressing against the frame as though she wants to escape. Why would you want to surround yourself with sadness?

Sighing, more out of tiredness than annoyance, Sherlock turns to the bedside table that he knows is there and grabs the bottle of cold water placed there next to a bowl of fruit. The fruit makes him nauseous so instead he concentrates on the water; it feels lovely in his parched throat, washes away the foul taste in his mouth.

He’s too worn out to feel anything but mild aggravation at Mycroft. Clearly he must have picked him
up from whichever despicable place he’d landed up during his high. He tries to remember but the effort makes his head hurt, so he pushes it away and puts the empty bottle back on the dresser. Admittedly, Mycroft’s flat is the last place he would want to be. He’s woken up here too many times than could be considered bearable, had once sweated out a hellish one-week withdrawal before he had thrown out all of Mycroft’s work files in a pique of rage, written “Ponce” on his office wall with red lipstick he’d stolen from Anthea, and left.

Sherlock lifts a hand to scratch at his chest and realises he’s been dressed in clothes that are not his own; grey t shirt, dark blue pyjama bottoms. They’re comfortable and soft, not worn thin through use like his own clothes. It makes him feel vaguely like a prisoner. He is, for all intents and purposes. It will be difficult trying to escape a second time. Mycroft must have increased the vigilance on him.

Suddenly angry, Sherlock leaps out of bed. The movement makes his entire world spin but he marches on; determined to find Mycroft- and- what? Punch him? That sounds absolutely lovely. It would be quite satisfying to break his nose, to have some blood on his knuckles. They haven’t gotten into a good fist fight in years, it would probably do him good. Do Mycroft good as well, give him a bit of exercise.

A maid catches him striding determinedly towards Mycroft’s office and she steps in front of him to prevent it. Manicured fingers raised up in front of her chest, eyes wide in alarm. “Mr. Holmes, your brother is very bu-”

“An enormous berk, yes, I’m aware,” he snaps at her, and swipes at her like she’s an irritating fly. She frowns, furious with him, mouth set in a straight line. She’s recently gotten into a relationship with an Alpha and she’s already struggling with feelings of inadequacy and Sherlock’s refusal to obey her instructions has made her feel worse. Sherlock should feel bad for her, but he doesn’t. He’s a sociopath, isn’t he? He’s been diagnosed plenty of times. He doesn’t need to feel anything for her.

He ignores her and walks down the hall, past the ridiculous framed photo of their parents, the vases with fresh cut flowers. It all looks too much like his childhood home. Sherlock had never really felt comfortable here.

Anthea looks up at him when he enters. She’s standing beside Mycroft’s desk, reading something to him from a file. Dark eyes flick over his form and she looks vaguely disappointed, slightly amused. Sherlock narrows his eyes at her but he can’t deduce anything.

“Mr. Holmes,” she greets him lazily, and goes back to reading the file.

“Good morning, brother,” Mycroft says mildly, not even sparing him a glance. Sherlock feels his
nostrils flare, rage threatening to spill out of his mouth in ugly, unforgivable words. He chooses to stride in instead, shutting the door so hard behind him it rattles.

“Once again, I see, you’ve taken it upon yourself to play Big Brother and poke your nose where it isn’t wanted,” he snarls, walking up to the desk and banging a fist on the wood. Mycroft finally looks up, eyebrows raised, mouth curling up into a condescending smile. Sherlock has seen it so many times that his body recognises it as the beginning of a verbal battle, and tenses.

“Once again,” Mycroft echoes. “I had to drag you out of a half-dressed stranger’s filthy flat in the middle of nowhere, I realise we both enjoy being consistent. Anthea,” he turns to his secretary (or whatever Mycroft chooses to call her) “Would you mind giving us a few minutes?”

Sherlock laughs, and it is a grating, bitter sound. “Ah yes. A few minutes. That’s all you need to wrap this up, is it?” Anthea quietly puts the file down and steps out of the office. “A few minutes and you’ll have handled your wayward little brother, the one who’s always making these messes you have to clean up-”

“That’s enough,” Mycroft says sharply. Sherlock’s mouth closes shut in spite of himself. Mycroft hasn’t any suppressants on, and the smell suddenly becomes overwhelming. He’s posturing, trying to use his status to crow Sherlock into obeying him. Sherlock feels absolutely venomous, but his body seems to be incapable of refusing his brother. “You couldn’t even walk straight, let alone talk. You were practically overdosing. How long has this bender lasted? A week? Two weeks? A month? You say you don’t want to go to rehab. Do you want to kill yourself instead?”

Sherlock inhales sharply and looks away and tries to concentrate on the Grandfather clock. Tick tick. He hadn’t considered the possibility of death, not really. Perhaps not considering death negates other considerations, like surviving a month long cocaine bender. Suddenly feeling very tired, he pulls out a chair with shaking hands and drops himself into it. He’s strongly aware of Mycroft’s gaze on him as he rubs a hand over his dry, itchy face and tries to calm himself.

“I-” he starts. I wasn’t trying to kill myself, he wants to say. He just wanted to forget. How does he make Mycroft see this? Without humiliating himself even further? He can almost see the knowing smile, the disappointed shake of his head. I told you not to get involved, brother, and see where you’ve landed yourself.


Sherlock lifts an eyebrow at him, mocking. “Do you keep all of them right there, under your nose?”
“Paperwork can get awfully dull,” he points out. “Chinese?”

Sherlock’s stomach rumbles in reply. “Shouldn’t I be eating something healthier?” he asks.

“Pizza?” Mycroft offers, smile widening. He slips out a Pizza Hut menu from the stack. “This one has tomatoes.”

***

Their uneasy camaraderie vanishes quickly when Sherlock vomits out the pizza two hours later, and he’s shaking and trembling, his fever rising. He puts a warm forehead against the cold porcelain of the toilet.

It’s too familiar, this entire curled-up-above-the-toilet-seat business, and reminds Sherlock that he doesn’t have any suppressants left. This leads to a rather humiliating panic attack, right there in Mycroft’s gleaming bathroom. He’s glad he didn’t follow him here. He can only imagine Mycroft’s reaction to seeing him pale and sweating and miserable because he’ll have to succumb to a heat next month. On top of everything else. Sherlock feels like crying.

He finds Mycroft in his library, and grabs him by the collar of his shirt, rams him up against a bookshelf and pins him there. “Suppressants. Where are they? You didn’t have them delivered this month.”

Mycroft looks unflinchingly at him, unperturbed by the manic edge in his voice. His hands curl around Sherlock’s frail wrists, and pushes them down.

“How Sherlock—”

“I hate you, and everything is awful, and I want my suppressants!” he shouts before Mycroft can finish, and swipes out a hand at a bookshelf. Dozens of hard-backed texts, first editions probably, scatter to the floor in an expensive mess.

“Charming,” Mycroft comments, and slips past him to pick up the books where they’ve fallen. Sherlock watches him, seething, as he puts them carefully back into place. It takes about three and a half minutes, and at the end of it, Mycroft has a pale sheen of sweat around his hairline.
“John and you aren’t seeing each other anymore, I imagine,” he says quietly, not quite meeting his eye.

Sherlock stares at him. “You,” he starts. He blinks a few times. Surely Mycroft cannot be so cruel as to throw that in his face. He wants to be angry, but all Sherlock feels is an indeterminable amount of sadness. His heart stutters in his chest and the emptiness manifests in a dull cramp in his abdomen, not unlike the ones that precede heat. Sherlock doesn’t want a repeat of what happened in Lestrade’s office. So he flattens his mouth into a straight line and leaves the office before he can say anything else or worse, start sobbing like a child again.

***

Mycroft finds him rummaging about in the spare bedroom, opening the wardrobe and ripping the sheets off the bed.

“What are they?” he snaps, getting down on his hands and knees and looking under the bed. Mycroft leans against the doorway and sips his tea.

“What is ‘they?’” he asks mildly.

“My clothes. I want to leave.”

Mycroft doesn’t answer at first. “Greg Lestrade emailed me last week,” he says at last.

“Glad to know he’s still in your employ,” Sherlock answers scathingly, sitting cross legged on the floor. His back has started to cramp, along with his shins. How he’s going to get back in this state, he is unsure. Usually he’s shooting before the come down assaults him in all of its demonic glory.

“Greg Lestrade does not work for me.”

Mycroft enters the room and sit down on the bed. Sherlock feels a bit silly sitting at his feet but he can’t summon the energy to stand. He settles for glaring at Mycroft.

“This nonsensical conversation is relevant to me- how?”
“Sudden feelings of grief, longing and pain are not uncommon after bonding with a-”

“Shut up, shut up!” Sherlock interjects, panic spreading through him like wildfire. He scrambles to his feet immediately. “Shut up. Just fucking shut up. You think you know everything, all the time. Does it occur to you that perhaps, you don’t?”

“Sherlock, you should consider the possibility-”

“And why on earth do you care, anyway?” Sherlock demands. This is all terribly unfair. Why can’t Mycroft behave like he used to, when he abhorred sentiment and told Sherlock off for things like crying? Why does everyone think they understand and have him all figured out? Why does everyone seem to be able to find an answer so easily when Sherlock is always grasping at straws and struggling to comprehend? “You don’t care about any of this. You thought I was fucking John for drugs. Don’t deny it.”

Mycroft barely flinches at his crass language. “I believed no such thing. It would have been obvious to me if you had, and I knew you hadn’t.” His tone is calm, too calm and what can Sherlock do with him when he’s so annoyingly calm? He can’t punch him, or hit him, or call him names, because then Mycroft would have the upper moral ground like he always does.

Sherlock fumes and reaches behind himself to support his weakened body against a cabinet. He hates feeling like this. All he needs is another hit and he’ll be fine again. Able to walk straight. Able to think. More importantly, to forget. “Oh I see,” he finally says, and lets his tone sound as acerbic and superior as possible. “Now that John is out of the picture you’re worried you won’t have a convenient person to mind me. Or no- wait. Isn’t this the perfect opportunity to say I told you so? Lovely thing to hold over my head now, I imagine. Ah yes, Sherlock tried to initiate a relationship with a person and he went right ahead and cocked it up.”

Mycroft looks at him for a long time, stormy eyes unreadable. He’s always been difficult to deduce. After Sherlock Presented he became even more of a stranger, and Sherlock’s hero worship had quickly turned into resentment and bitterness.

“Out of the picture,” Mycroft finally echoes, and his eyes flick over to his neck. He says the words like he’s testing them in his mouth, to see how they sound. If they hold up against fact and logic. Suddenly Sherlock feels like they’re both playing a game and he’s the one who has no idea what the rules are, if winning really means winning and if they’re even playing the same game.
“Is he, though?” Mycroft finishes, and turns away from him.

Sherlock swallows. Tick, tick, goes the Grandfather clock. He can hear it from here. Mocking. Knowing.

***

“Do you want me to beg? Very well. I’ll beg. Please.” The word is ill used in his mouth. His fingers clamp around the receiver hard. His knees tremble. “Mycroft, please. I’m begging you. This is what you wanted, isn’t it?”

“Don’t be ridiculous,” Mycroft says automatically. “And I’ve already explained to you. There are even more regulations than before. I’ve put in some calls. Thrown some money around. An enormous amount actually, prices have tripled. It will take time, though, Sherlock. I would advise you to swallow your pride and spend your next heat in relative comfort in a safe place, that I will arrange for you—”

“You’re the fucking government, why can’t you do this minuscule thing for me?”

“It’s not minuscule, you idiot. It’s difficult. They are highly regulated and you’ve already gone beyond the maximum dosage. You will have to wait, there is no other option.”

Sherlock throws the phone against the wall.

It’s been more than a year. He doesn’t even remember what he feels like. All he remembers is the desperation, the never ending desire and the aching, awful loneliness.

Sherlock thinks about John’s fingers pushing inside of him and realises that perhaps this is what that feeling is: loneliness. He’s never felt it so acutely to put a name on it.

***

It happens inside NSY, when Sherlock’s just come off a glorious high, and he’s tired and shaking and snapping at everyone like a wounded animal. He’s not high anymore, technically, so Lestrade
shouldn’t treat him like a wayward child and point him in the direction of the exit. He scowls, and then says something mocking and resentful. He half registers that he’s being cruel just for the sake of it, that he only has a few friends and pointing out the flaws in their marital relationship would only serve to distance them as well.

After all, it must be so difficult to love Sherlock, despite of it all. Mycroft is chained by his own biology, Lestrade because he sees his only daughter only rarely and Sherlock seems to fill some paternal void inside of him. Or possibly because Sherlock helps with the cases and he is useful.

He says more hurtful things until Lestrade snaps and tell him to just “fuck off, Sherlock,” and it’s a teensy bit satisfying. Sherlock is itching for a fight, after all. So he waits for the punch, but it doesn’t come. Instead of turning around and leaving like he’s been asked to, he opens his mouth to tell off another officer who is discreetly watching the proceedings.

What comes out of his mouth is a half-hearted gasp, and he pulls Lestrade towards himself with a hand on his collar and noses his throat. “Ah fuck,” he says, and feels slick filling the seat of his pants.

“Oh, you nutter,” Lestrade mutters under his breath, and tries to peel Sherlock off him. But Sherlock doesn’t want that does he? Lestrade smells lovely. Not particularly excellent, but it’s comforting, and if Sherlock could just pull them both down on the floor and curl next to him, that would be fantastic. He tells him this, and he expects Lestrade to agree whole heartedly and start taking off his clothes to facilitate better access to his scent glands. Instead, Lestrade looks alarmed and then he’s grabbing Sherlock’s wrist and pushing him behind himself.

“Alright, you two, back off. Sally, get a police car. I’m calling his brother.”

Sherlock peeks over Lestrade’s shoulder and sees two Alpha officers, their nostrils flaring and eyes zoned in on Sherlock, interested and predatory. One of them has blue eyes. Sherlock should want him. It should feel right to want it, but instead he’s never seen a pair of people so utterly offending and instead, feeling miserable, he presses his nose against the back of Lestrade’s neck and and breathes.

There is a great deal of commotion after that. Lestrade calls for back up, and he’s surrounded by a group of terrible-smelling officers. Not that they’re unwashed or anything, they’re all Betas and he has to wrinkle his nose in disgust. Lestrade is half carrying, half dragging him through the building. Sherlock has clawed his hands into his shirt, and he can’t seem to get enough of his smell. He’s burning up, and the cramps are starting, and in an hour or two he won’t know anything else except the all consuming desire to fuck and mate. Sherlock should feel resentful, or angry, or even terrified, but all he feels is a dull sadness.
He’ll be alone for all of it.

***

Sherlock’s first experience with heat was awful. He remembers, because it’s a memory he can’t seem to quite delete. Victor would have been nice, he used to think. If he’d let biology take its course and allowed Victor to fuck him blind, maybe they would have bonded and Sherlock’s loneliness would be gone forever. It’s a distant recollection now, he can barely even remember the shape of Victor’s smile. He remembers his touch though; it’s difficult to forget when it was the first he’d ever known. Sherlock had always expected sex to be followed by pain, and bruises, and a sick feeling of inadequacy that he never could quite shake off.

Compared to that, this is Hell.

Sherlock must be in Hell, because it’s not possible for normal people to feel like this. It was supposed to be softer, less painful, he is in his twenties and he’d been on suppressants for all of the last five years, so why did he feel like something was scraping out his insides with a scalpel? He rolls over in the enormous bed, sobbing, fingers pushing in and up. He moans with the feeling of it, twists his wrist over and over until he’s coming, the bed turning sodden with his slick.

He wants, so badly. The loneliness crawls inside his chest and refuses to dissipate. It runs through his entire body, and he feels like he’s been ripped in half. Taunt, like skin stretched tight. His neck twinges every moment, his scent gland turning swollen and throbbing and Sherlock knows just what he needs to stop it. He feels miserable, and pathetic, and when he’s not moaning and grinding his arse against the bed, he’s crying over nothing at all.

Sherlock feels like he’s been shot full of holes, like there’s a gaping chasm where his chest should be, and all he knows is that if John were here, he would touch him and everything would be fine. John would fill in this wretched emptiness and slip his fingers inside of him and plug him up and then he’d fuck him and Sherlock would feel whole again. Sherlock tortures himself in the throes of heat with images of John with some other faceless omega, and he burns with both fever and jealousy. If he’d missed him before, he is positively aching without him now. Sherlock’s body seems to have decided that relief can only come from one specific person, and Sherlock’s sore fingers and wrists do nothing to change its mind.

Everything hurts, and everything is bloody terrible, and Sherlock loves someone who will never love him back, because he’s not something that can be loved. Maybe John will want to shag him now, when he’s in heat, maybe John will succumb to his instincts and knot him full until he’s sobbing and begging, and Sherlock will be content with that. Sherlock will carry the memory of John inside him like a treasure, and Sherlock will learn to be happy with it. He could, if he tried. He could trick himself into it.
Love, after all, is a trick of the senses. Maybe, once he’s been without him for long enough, the feeling will just go away and Sherlock can go back to being who he was before he’d met him.

Would he like that?

Panic skitters through his body at the idea; nervous anxiety chokes him. When the heat is gone Sherlock will have to face the world again, his stupid John-less world and his stupid, dull existence and his stupid crush and he was going to die by thirty anyway, that was the plan; so why is he complaining now?

***

John comes back.

****

John comes back, and Sherlock hates him for a few minutes. John thought he was a junkie, and didn’t John want to fix him like he was some kind of broken machinery, and oh, good, now he’s spoken to Mycroft behind his back? Delightful. John smells like he’s fucked through all of London’s omega population and he hates it, and he wants to smear their bodies together until he’s covered every inch of John’s skin with his own scent, like a dog pissing over a fire hydrant. Mine. Mine.Mine.

Sherlock is rude and snappish and he lashes out at John because he’s afraid of what happens next. Sherlock wants to hit him and curl up next to him on the floor at the same time so what comes out is awful words he doesn’t really mean. All he wants is for John to not look at him like he’s some damaged thing, is that too much to ask?

And then, the inevitable. “You’ll leave,” he tells John, and John says no, and kisses him, and every touch feels like a promise and Sherlock’s heart finds warmth again, and maybe, just maybe, he was wrong.

***

Things change, after that. But not quite. Sherlock has never felt so out of his depth before. John is lovely and clever and interesting and kind, and it would be so easy for him to recognise Sherlock for
what he is and leave. Sherlock keeps expecting it, each day passes and he prepares himself for the inevitable goodbye.

Weeks pass and it never comes.

Instead John insinuates himself into Sherlock’s life like he’s always been there, and for some reason, for some inexplicable reason they fit. Sherlock thought it would be difficult, that John would find the prickly, ugly parts of his personality too much to bear and would wonder if it was even worth the effort. He is wrong, on all accounts. Sherlock’s never met someone who’s surprised him so much before.

***

Sherlock doesn’t tell him about the old, gnawing emptiness and the pain, and the misery, and the missing him so much. He suspects John is hiding something from him as well, but neither of them say it. Sherlock’s scent gland stops twitching and the holes fill themselves again, and it's good, so why question it? Why ask things that neither of them are prepared to answer?

*What happened?* he wants to ask. *What happened to me when you left, why did it happen?*

***

He starts playing his violin again. John always looks pleasantly surprised when he picks up the instrument. He couldn’t be bothered by the nitty-gritties of music, the technicalities, precision means nothing to him. He seems content to just sit and stare while Sherlock plays, eyes growing soft and fond in a way that no one has ever looked at him before. Sherlock is in a romantic mood, so he plays Bach.

***

John meets him almost everyday, and cooks Sherlock dinner, and sometimes they both stretch out on the sofa and John studies while Sherlock pours over cases. When Sherlock gets bored he complains about it loudly and John pushes him against the cushions and kisses him until he’s gasping. They don’t talk about his Heat, because Sherlock is on suppressants again, and John doesn’t mind.

Sometimes, though, when John is bent over at the kitchen table, and his blonde hair falls over his forehead, Sherlock wonders what he’d look like in Rut. Blue eyes possessive and maybe just a bit menacing; would his hands leave bruises on his hips, his shoulders. Would he say nice things? John is usually so tolerant and mild, like a good cup of tea; solid, steady, *trustworthy*. What would happen if John were to spiral out of control, if he was suddenly consumed with the desire to push Sherlock against some surface and breed him?

“You’re staring at me,” he suddenly says, and smiles. Sherlock blinks at him from his position,
curled up on the armchair.

“The sky is blue,” Sherlock replies. “Since we’re stating obvious things.”

"Prat,” John calls him, good naturedly. “It’s a bit creepy. It’s fine, though. Carry on. It’s also kind of flattering.”

"You're an idiot," Sherlock tells him, because it's true, and John grins at him like it's the best compliment in the world.

***

Sherlock finds himself on the business end of a switchblade one evening. Mark, who he'd been carefully avoiding for a while, has found him in his flat and has him backed up against his fridge, sharp edge of metal pressed against his throat.

Sherlock had paid him off and split his share with him, and as far as his knowledge and memory stretched, he'd given him back his share. Somehow Mark seems to have convinced himself that Sherlock has stolen something from him, and he believes that threatening him will magically make Sherlock admit to something he hasn't done.

"I didn't take anything," he growls at him, putting his hands up in surrender. Mark snarls and presses the knife in further. His pupils are dilated. It nicks the tiniest bit of skin at his neck, and he feels a warm pinprick of blood on the skin.

"You're lying. I know you're lying. You fucking twat. You were tricking me all the time, weren't you? You've been selling to them for triple the price and keeping the profits. I want it back."

Mark lifts up a knee and presses it to his thigh in emphasis. Sherlock breathes through his nose and tries to think of a plan. He's not bad holding himself in a physical fight, he's boxed before. But any sudden move and Mark could slice open an artery and kill him.

Keys jingle outside the door, and the lock clicks. Mark's eyes widen and his stance loosens just a bit, and Sherlock uses the second of leeway he's been granted and manages to disarm him, shove him flat against the dining table and pin his arms against his back.

John steps into the flat, grocery bag in his hand, and raises his eyebrows. His eyes skitter over the scene, the switchblade on the floor, and the tendril of blood trickling down Sherlock's throat. His sniffs, looks at Mark who's struggling underneath his grip.

Sherlock is caught off guard by his sudden entry, and by how John’s shoulders and the tips of his hair are wet with rain. He’d run out without an umbrella because Sherlock said they were out of tea,
and John had grumbled and groused but gone anyway, because he knows Sherlock gets into a strop when there isn’t any tea.

Mark rears back suddenly, and elbows him in the gut. Sherlock, winded, lets go of him, hand flying to his abdomen. Then, the \textit{thump} as John’s grocery bag hits the floor. Mark turns toward him, hands stretched out as if he’s about to squeeze Sherlock’s neck but before he can touch him John grabs his head in a chokehold and pulls him back roughly.

He pushes the knife away with his foot and it skitters across the floor. John looks up at him and smiles grimly; a dangerous curve that lights all of Sherlock’s synapses on fire. His eyes hone in on his throat and his nostrils flare, and he tightens his hold. Mark is beginning to turn quite blue.

“What- is all this?” John asks mildly, as if they’re discussing the weather.

“You’re going to kill him,” Sherlock points out.

John snorts. “I know how much pressure it would take to actually kill someone. Doctor, remember? Anyway…” He lets go of Mark and Mark immediately steps away from him, coughing and gagging.

“You fucking- you \textit{stole}-” he gasps.

“Get out,” John tells him, sounding quite calm. His eyes hold no sympathy for the man who’s struggling to get their breath back in their kitchen. Sherlock notes with delight that the back of his neck is flushed pink and he has a sudden desire to press his tongue there, lick at John, taste his fury.

John crosses his arms across his chest. He’s wearing an old leather jacket, something he’s been using for years. It suits him. Sherlock suddenly forgets about Mark and wants to wear the coat, cover himself in John’s scent. Or have John fuck him while he’s wearing nothing but that jacket.

They haven’t had sex yet, because neither of them has initiated it, because John says they can take things slow and Sherlock agrees with him.

“I swear to God,” John says, more loudly, and he takes a step towards Mark, fists clenched at his side. “You get out right the fuck \textit{now} or I call the police.”
Mark leaves soon after that, even though Sherlock knows it’s not the last he’s seen of him. It’s fine though, he’s used to being threatened by people. Hardly the first time, and it won’t be the last.

Sherlock realises he’s been holding his breath the entire time, and lets out a shaky exhale. He leans against the dining table for a second before he slides to the floor. John rummages about in the kitchen and finds a paper towel, kneels down in front of him and presses it to his neck. Blue eyes, burning with concern, travel down the length of his body; assessing, checking for injuries. Making sure he’s alright.

"Do you want to tell me what that was about, then?" he asks mildly, and it's not an order. It's a request for Sherlock to speak but John asks him with the air of someone who knows he's going to obeyed.

Licking his lips, Sherlock answers. "I- I sold his drugs for a while. I could sell them at double price, and I found more customers. With my- er, skills. It was easier."

John exhales roughly and nods, and then he's standing up, away from Sherlock, binning the napkin, washing his hands. Sherlock feels like he's being punished, even though he's knows it's ridiculous. John wouldn't hold this against him, not when Sherlock had so clearly been trying his hardest. He'd never gone so long without getting high, and John had been proud. John's happiness had filled him like the warmth of summer and it was even better than a high and Sherlock had wanted more of it. Besides, he'd told John he was only a user. He wasn't addicted. He could stop.

The distance between them seems painfully physical, and Sherlock aches to close it. Sherlock stands up hurriedly, and places himself right next to John at the sink.

"I don't do it anymore," he says, trying not to let desperation colour his voice.

John turns to face him, and his eyes are soft. "I know," he says. "Is there anything in the flat?"

Sherlock wants to shake his head. He wants to say no. He could lie. It would be easy. The split second of hesitation hardens John's gaze and his jaw is set.

"Get it. All of it. Now."

Sherlock narrows his eyes. "You can't-"
"Oh, can't I?" John repeats, sarcastic. "I can, and I will, Sherlock. All of it, right now." John is a few inches shorter than him but right now he seems to loom over him. Sherlock sniffs, and resists the temptation to bear his neck. John never uses the whole Alpha Pheromone thing like many of them do to make omegas a tad bit more compliant. Mycroft does, often, and he hates it.

"Sherlock, I have never ordered you do anything in your life, and I won't, but right now, I want all the drugs in this flat right here, on the kitchen table." He pats the wood to emphasise. "Do you think you could do that for me? You promised, remember? You promised."

His voice goes soft at the end, and now it sounds like John is pleading. Sherlock feels miserable. He doesn't want John to ever, ever sound like that. John puts his hand on Sherlock's arm, and presses up on the balls of his feet to place a dry, chaste kiss against his mouth. "Come on, love. Trust me. You can do this."

Sherlock sighs, and nods, and leaves the kitchen.

***

John stands behind him as he empties about five hundred pounds worth of cocaine into the toilet. He could have at least sold it, then it wouldn't have been such a waste. But when he makes the suggestion John's eyes go hard and flinty and Sherlock, torn between feeling thrilled and contrite, backed down.

When it's over, John kneels down next to him and curls his hands over Sherlock's ears, and kisses him. Sherlock gasps against his mouth and finds that he's shaking, because now he's gone and done it, it feels like giving up something enormous and John is proud of him, and that means something. He never had anyone to do this for before, and now he does, and it's exhilarating.

He climbs into John's lap and wraps his arms around his neck and John swipes his tongue into his mouth and holds him by the hips and says he is "brilliant, fantastic, gorgeous, I knew you could do it. I am so fucking proud of you, you're a god damn treasure, you prat. God, I'll kill anyone who hurts you."

The last bit is accompanied with a bite to the jaw, and Sherlock's toes curl in pleasure. Sherlock presses his nose against John's neck, and he smells only like himself, with a bit of the dull scent of suppressants from being around Sherlock so much. It makes Sherlock unbearably happy. He presses in further and further until he's crying, and then John is rocking him back and forth and he didn't realise it would end up like this, but it's fine, it's all fine. John says it is and Sherlock wants to believe him, so he does.

****

Everything is good. Everything is near perfect, until it's not.
The bell rings and Sherlock wakes up from a nap. He'd been curled up on his armchair, waiting for John to come back from the pub he'd gone to with his friends. John having other friends is terribly inconvenient for him, but to be fair, John had asked him to join. His friends were tolerable. But he didn't particularly like pubs.

Hoping he's returned, Sherlock wobbles to the door and opens it.

And freezes.

He's cut his hair shorter, it's almost cropped. The angle of his face looks different without the artful waves that used to frame it. Eyes as piercing as ever, with the ability to make Sherlock feel like he's been turned inside out and pinned on a display board. He tries to say something but finds that his voice is gone. His mouth doesn't seem to be able to work. Sherlock hasn’t seen him in three years and he seems to have forgotten the effect he has on him.

"Hello, Sherlock," Victor says, and smiles.

***

Chapter End Notes

Questions? Outage? Hit that comments button or drop me a kudos. Until next time.
Cheers. XX
Chapter Summary

“Just…be quiet. And listen. Will you do that?”

Chapter Notes

So. Some Important Things are to happen in this chapter, which is why it's my longest yet. (another less cooler reason would be that I have no self control) Please go through the tags once. There will also be some gratuitous smut to help with all the Nastiness.
I know this fic has a PWP tag and it originally began as that. However, it has recently started spiralling out of my control and I have landed up with...this. Fuelled as this fic is by my person experiences, it's become a little more than I had initially planned. I do apologise for how angsty and plotty it's become. At it's heart though, it still remains what it was Intended to Be: an excuse to write a great deal of omegavers porn, and a great deal of hurt/comfort.
This fic is also mostly about Sherlock, his struggles, and his experiences. While John is an integral part of his journey towards getting better, he's not a pancea. This fic is going to have some serious relationship problems. We'll get there. But, I promise you an unambigiously happy, Johnlock ending. Johnlock will always and forever be Endgame in all of my fics.
So this was a disclaimer, which is funny, because I'm already 80000 words in, and it's going to get smuttier and angstier from here. Where are the pornos, you ask. They're coming.
Lastly, Sherlock's experiences are not universal. They are based on my own understanding and interpretation of similar situations, and I am sorry if anything I write offends, hurts or triggers any of you. That was not my intention. It seems important that I say this, considering the content of this fic. Please let me know if there are more tags I should add.
This chapter is heavy on dialogue, but I suspect you'll all be happy with the end result. Enjoy, and do drop me a review when you're done. This chapter was one hell of a roller coaster to write.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

What did you bury
Before those hands pulled me
From the earth?
For an inexplicable moment, time freezes. Sherlock vaguely registers that he should have been able to tell from the scent alone who was on the other side of the door. Though he hasn’t smelled it in years, it only takes a few seconds for the scent to waft up his nose, squeeze around his brain, tie his gut into knots.

Two more seconds pass and Sherlock can feel his hairline and the back of his neck grow damp. The inside of his mouth gone completely dry, his body’s fight or flight response triggering a knee-jerk anxiety reaction.

It’s like a glitch in the delicate balance of his existence; the appearance of something so unforeseen that it has the power to cause everything to come toppling down.

“Why-” he starts. Swallows. Why on earth is he struggling to get words out? It’s been two years. This shouldn’t be difficult. Victor’s smile widens as he watches Sherlock blanch, swallow hard, and then make another valiant effort to speak.

“You look good,” he tells him before Sherlock can say anything. It completely derails his train of thought.

“I- what? That’s not-” he shakes his head, fleetingly wondering if it makes him look like a dog trying to get rid of an irritating fly. He feels immediately self conscious, tries to cover more of the doorway with his body as though Victor would shove past him and enter his flat without his permission. He would, though. Victor would. Victor has always been incapable of taking Sherlock’s wants into account. He ties the sash of his dressing gown more securely around his waist. Victor notices the action, with what is clearly more than a bit of self satisfaction.

“Will you ever let me in?” once again, Sherlock is caught off-guard. He still hasn’t been able to get a whole sentence out. Victor makes a split movement- clearly to initiate the process of pushing Sherlock inside and making his way into his flat. Sherlock hurriedly reaches out an arm and stops him.

“Why are you here?” he finally asks. There. Finally. His heart stutters uncomfortably. It’s still difficult for his brain to accept the reality of Victor being here; barely a few inches separating them. The last time he’d seen him they’d had sex. The sudden flash of memory leads to a sickening feeling in his stomach.

Victor looks up from his barricading arm and up at his face, smile still in place, now a bit strained. Sherlock finally notices the slight shadows under his eyes. And then: the faded bond mark. Ah.

“Deduced it then, have you?” Victor comments, recognising the familiar signs. His tone is acidic.
Sherlock almost flinches. He’d become so used to a fawning audience for his deductions, it almost comes as a surprise that it once was something to be ridiculed.

Victor watches him deliberate and reaches up a hand and before he can stop it, a slender finger tip glides down the side of his face. The touch ignites something inside him; it’s only vaguely sexual, the more predominating reaction is panic.

“Vic-” he breathes. His fingers twitch, half heartedly he flails his hand and tries to push Victor away. Victor smiles, takes the action as encouragement and brushes his finger across his bottom lip.

“You’re pouting,” he complains, finger still on his mouth. It slips downwards, follows the curve of his chin, down his throat, presses in softly at his Adam’s apple and then drags to the side, hovers over the spot where a bond mark should be. Victor raises his eyebrows, steps an inch closer so that the tips of their feet are almost touching. His scent overpowers almost everything else; it isn’t soft and mellow like John’s, or comforting, at all- it drowns out everything else until Sherlock feels sixteen again, covered in marks and wearing damp jeans. It’s so easy to fall into the familiar pattern.

“You’re unbonded,” he says quietly, and then unfurls his fingers to wrap around the back of Sherlock’s neck and pull him closer. Noses his throat. Sherlock swallows thickly, hands balling into fists at his sides and digging painful crescents into his skin. He screws his eyes shut and wills himself to do something, anything, his fists used to fly without qualms as a teenager, he’d left plenty of bloody noses in his wake in the past. Why can’t he do anything now? Why?

John seems so distant now, a pleasant memory. Vaguely he’s aware of Victor’s hands sliding down his sides, moving down to grip his hips. He’s being shifted about, forward, Victor’s mouth still on his neck. The soft click of the door being shut, and then he’s being twisted, shoved up against the door.

“Are you seeing someone? I can smell him on you,” one quick pull and the dressing gown falls open.

And suddenly, Sherlock feels nauseous. The back of his neck stings, a sudden wave of sickness overtakes him and he feels trapped by the presence of Victor’s body. How could he even have allowed himself to be touched by him?

“Get off,” he growls, and lifts both hands to Victor’s chest. The ghost of a memory; after his first kiss- push him off or pull him closer? This time Sherlock doesn’t hesitate. He pushes with all his might. He looks down at himself, and he feels positively sick. What on earth was wrong with him? Why couldn’t he have done that sooner? Disgusted, his hands move of their own accord, rubbing, smearing at his skin as if to get rid of the feel of Victor’s touch. What has he done? He controls the urge to gag and instead focuses on retying his gown.

“Sherlock-” Victor says his name, confused, his handsome face becoming distorted with disbelief and anger. He moves towards Sherlock with his hand outstretched, to touch him again, and the very idea of it makes Sherlock want to vomit all over him.

“If you lay a finger on me I will break your wrist, Victor,” he says calmly, and Victor stops. The smug smile flickers, replaced by something darker; menacing.

He makes a placating gesture with his hands; palms facing Sherlock. He pants softly, the push threw him off balance. Mostly because Sherlock’s passivity had become the core of their relationship; Sherlock never really resisted. Not until...Not until last time, and where had that landed him?

“Don’t be ridiculous, Sherlock,” he says, and his tone is so condescending it absolutely grates on Sherlock’s nerves, because hasn’t he always been like this, and why had Sherlock never noticed? So
blinded by the belief in his own inadequacy, he’d never given a thought to how little Victor thought of him.

He ignores his quip and instead steps closer. Victor’s body sways for a second, caught between stepping back and getting right back in Sherlock’s face. He settles for staying still. Sherlock looks in his eyes, and it’s terrifying, because all he can remember is Victor’s cruel laughter, the icy whip of winter rain, the feeling of utter loss—

“It’s been over a year,” he spits out. “What do you want now? What could you possibly want from me, Victor, that you haven’t fucked out of half of London’s population?”

Victor emits a soft, incredulous laugh, eyes inching heavenward as if asking for divine intervention. He spins around, ignoring Sherlock’s question, turning his back to him. Sherlock watches in bewilderment as he looks around the living room, emitting a low whistle as he surveys the awkward mish-mash of furniture, books, and scientific paraphernalia.

“Always were a bit weird, weren’t you,” he comments, eyes fixed on the headphones-wearing-bison. Sherlock grits his teeth and runs a frustrated hand through his hair, when it suddenly occurs to him that Victor has never been in his flat before. Much greater than the undeniable fact that he picked the lock on the building door (Ms Hudson wouldn’t have let him in without asking Sherlock if he was expecting someone), is the glaring realisation that Victor’s come across it through less than honourable means.

He strides towards him, cups an angular shoulder and forcibly spins him around. “You don’t know where I live. I never gave you my address.”

Victor smirks, cocks his head. He lifts his hand and cups it where Sherlock’s is clawed into his jacket, drags it down. “Don’t be an idiot. Our emails. The ones you stopped replying to.”

“You-what? Traced my IP address?”

Victor hums in assent, looks pleased as though Sherlock is a dog who’s performed a note-worthy trick. He walks away from him, focuses his attention on the leather sofa, eyes drag down to the coffee table where John left one of his medical textbooks. He watches in trepidation as Victor picks it up, leafs to the front page. Part of him wants to whip it out of his hands, because he doesn’t want Victor’s touch to soil anything that belongs to John.

“You’re seeing someone,” book still in hand, he looks up at him, disbelieving, smile still in place. “John Watson. Is this serious, then? Gotten yourself a boyfriend, babe? Didn’t think you were capable of it,” he shrugs and drops the book back on the table with a thud.

Sherlock realises he’s been standing in the same spot while Victor faffed around his flat, spreading his scent, touching all of his things, forming John’s name with his unworthy mouth. None of this is alright, and the longer Victor stays here, the filthier he feels, and the more of those nasty, pesky memories keep coming back.

“I don’t believe it’s any of your business,” he says evenly, resisting the temptation to claw a hand into his button down and throw him out. Victor raises an eyebrow at him, as though amused that Sherlock isn’t getting down on his knees right now, because that’s a routine Victor is used to, and this makes Sherlock terribly upset.

“And since you won’t tell me why you’re here,” he continues, steps closer, feeling reckless and angry, voice lowering as he flicks his eyes over Victor’s body and deduces. “Let me enlighten you. You were this close to an engagement. In fact you proposed. She said yes. And she was brilliant,
wasn’t she. Perfect, pretty brunette, nice legs, aspiring career in front of her. Likes being tied up during sex and hit. Yes, I suppose that would appeal to you. You never did get that far with me. But, hmm- the engagement didn’t last long and she was unfaithful. With-” Sherlock cocks his head, spots the faint bruise under his nose, the thin scrape made with a ring- “your flatmate, no less. And now you’re here, struggling with your own feelings of inadequacy and it’s frightfully easy to make you feel less like an Alpha, isn’t it, just one tiny gesture and you’re snapping your teeth, looking for someone else to subdue. And oh, Sherlock must be sprawled out on in some filthy alleyway, just begging for a cock up his arse-”

Victor’s uneasy good humour vanishes and it’s replaced by fury, Sherlock can see it light up his dark eyes. His hands twitch.

-“ah,” he whispers. “What would you like to do, Vic? Won’t be easy throwing me out of my own flat after a casual fuck, hmm?”

“You can’t even woo someone willing, you have to go sniffling like a dog and find someone who’s never been able to say no to you-”

“Never been able to say no to me?” Victor echoes, finally finding his voice, and before Sherlock can react, he twists a hand in his hair and pulls. Sherlock gasps, hands automatically reach out to bat him away, but Victor’s grip is strong. And it’s difficult to fight habit. “You little slut. Is that what you say to yourself, to sleep at night? That I- what? Forced myself on you?” He laughs loudly, one quick “Ha!” And lets go of Sherlock. Sherlock stumbles, resisting the urge to massage his scalp. His eyes are watering.

“You begged me for it each time, Sherlock, so don’t even try to pretend that I- that I abused you or something.”

Sherlock stares at him, fury and disbelief churning in his gut. But- of course! From Victor’s perspective, that must be precisely what it looks like. How could Victor know that Sherlock’s pleas were more for the loneliness to end, and not for sex? How could Victor know that he had craved physical affection, and not a cock? Nobody would have believed him, if he’d said, I just wanted a friend. I was sixteen. I didn’t even know how sex worked, not really.

“You threw me out of your flat,” he whispers, fight all gone. His voice sounds small, childish. The resentment that was twisting his stomach into knots vanishes, and is replaced by the familiar hurt.

“Because you were a freak!” Victor shouts. “And you still are, damn it! Does your- what’s his name- John? Does he even know you, Sherlock? Because no one can know you like I do. You were mad then, and you’re mad now, and the only difference is you’re using drugs to control it now, and not sex. You wanted me, and I gave you what you wanted. And when you went crazy, I wanted you out. What’s the big deal, hmm? What were you expecting- a mate? That’s never what we were.”

Sherlock swallows, and he’s eighteen again, just getting used to London, to the serpentine alleyways and the dizzying rush, hands fitting around a needle for the first time, Jack Daniels splattering across cream-coloured walls. Cherries and chocolate, an unsettling need to submit. History repeats itself.

“Come on,” Victor says, his voice softer, and Sherlock doesn’t move when he steps closer. Smooths his hands over his arms, brushes his hair back from his forehead. These are all unfamiliar touches- Victor only knew how to push and throw and prod. It makes his throat swell, for some indiscernible reason. “I’m here now, aren’t I? I came all the way to see you. It’s been so long, hasn’t it?” He cups Sherlock’s face, thumbs swipe over his cheekbones.
Moments ago Victor had been violent, and now, it’s...gone. He’s gentle now. With a feeling of foreboding, Sherlock realises his deductions may have been a bit off. Victor’s ex-mate hadn’t been unfaithful on a whim. It had been on purpose.

He should be scared. Why isn’t he scared? He had been. He should be. Victor tucks a loose curl behind his ear, and the action reminds him of John. John’s touch doesn’t elicit the same response, though. No. They’re so different.

Victor keeps his eyes locked with his and reaches into his jacket. Sherlock frowns, and watches as he extracts something from inside. Takes Sherlock’s wrist, palm up, and puts a tiny plastic packet there. Sherlock’s skin starts buzzing.

“No,” he says immediately, dropping it in panic, like he’s touched something burning. “What the hell, Victor, no.”

Victor rolls his eyes, picks it back up from the ground. “Have you gone sober now, then? Two years ago you would have sucked a cock for this.” He waves the packet in front of his eyes, grinning wolfishly.

Sherlock swallows, ignores the jibe. “I’m not...I don’t. I think you should...ah,” he steps away from him, tries to put distance between the two of them. Even from looking at it Sherlock can tell it’s the good stuff. And he’s right, Sherlock would have paid for that in any way possible in the past.

John. John will be here soon. Perhaps he should call him. Tell him to get over here and do something, because clearly Sherlock cannot be trusted to make decisions for himself. Not when old habits stare at him in the face like that. He hasn’t been clean long enough for the itching of his skin to subside when he sees it. Oh, fuck.

“University, then a nice job, then you’ll marry this Alpha of yours and have a few pups. Seems quite standard to me.” Victor rubs the tiny packet between his fingers, lips downturned in the mockery of surprise. “Can’t say I didn’t see that coming. One nice knot and you’re all quiet, submissive, ready to play Mum.”

“Shut up, Victor,” Sherlock says shakily. It has none of the bite he intended.

Victor looks up at him, fondling stops. A slow smile stretches his lips, eyes glint with malice. “Come on now,” he says. “Whatever do I have to do to entice you?”

Not much apparently, because forty five minutes later, he’s back in Victor’s flat.

Victor tries touching him twice, but both times Sherlock growls, pulling his arm behind his back and pushing him up against the nearest wall. “Don’t,” he hisses into his ear. Victor laughs at him, mocking, holding up his hands in surrender.

They snort the lines off the coffee table, and oh, oh. Why had he ever stopped? It feels glorious, burning into his skin, so familiar, excellent. Sherlock feels invincible, and he has missed this, he has missed this, it was a terrible idea to stop.
He darts about Victor’s flat, leafs through the textbooks, makes four cups of tea. Slides into an impromptu experiment using the ham in his fridge.

He’s concentrating very hard when Victor’s arms wrap around him from the back, push him against the table with his hips. Mouth on his neck. Sherlock rams into his gut with an elbow, turning back, bearing his teeth.

“Get-“

Victor’s hands grab his biceps, shove him roughly there. Dilated pupils, his heavy, haphazard rush of breath. “God, I want you-“

What happens next is confusing. It involves a great deal of physical fighting. Struggle. Victor keeps trying to grab his wrists and pin him against some surface. Ah. Trying to engage Sherlock in coitus although he clearly sees Sherlock is not interested. He knees him in the groin, pushes him off. Victor does not take the hint and grabs him by the throat, throws him against the fridge. Glassware tinkles from inside.

He has a black eye from Sherlock’s fist. He presses in more deeply, trying to achieve some form of friction with Sherlock’s limp cock.

Victor isn’t a bad fighter, he used to take martial arts lessons as a child. Of course, Sherlock had excelled much faster than him. Still, he’s good enough to present a bit of a challenge. Unluckily for him. Sherlock is also extremely clever and resourceful. He reaches out a hand and grabs a discarded fork kept on the counter, still greasy from being used for a meal. Holds it aloft and pushes it, with all his might, into Victor’s shoulder, the only part he can reach.

Victor rears back, glowering and grunting, hunched over. He reaches for the fork, pulls it out. Sherlock is panting hard.

“God, you’re still the same, such a whore,” Victor spits at him. The fork clutters to the ground, dotting the floor with bits of red.


Victor snarls, tries to reach for him again (lord, what an idiot) but Sherlock easily side steps out of the way, picks up another utensil from the cluttered table- a butter knife, and turns around, pins it against Victor’s throat.

“Not sharp enough to do enough damage,” he says breathlessly. “I’ll have to hack a bit. But if I use enough pressure, and trust me, Vic, I can, I’ll be able to slice you open quite nicely from carotid artery to jugular vein. I suspect it will be messy.”

“You wouldn’t.”

“Sober, no. High as a kite, like I am right now? Without a doubt.” As if to prove his point, he presses the knife in deeper. It would have been satisfying to draw blood, but it doesn’t. It does however constrict Victor’s breathing.

“Allright, fine, stop!” he gurgles, tries to bat Sherlock away. Sherlock relents, dropping his arm and stepping away from him. Breathing hard, he leans against the counter. Lets the knife drop from his fingers.
Victor peels himself away from the fridge, raises a hand to massage at his throat. Sherlock feels very ill, all of a sudden. His head spins, he feels like he’s floating. It’s like an out of body experience, but not quite. His mobile buzzes, probably the twelfth time since he’s left the flat. The sound is eerily loud in the kitchen.

John, worried about him. Wanting him home. The guilt is almost too much to bear, it twists and twists inside of him.

He feels absolutely disgusting.

Why is he here?

He shouldn’t be here.

Christ.

“I think I should leave,” he says, and it’s oddly formal for what just transpired a few minutes ago. Victor glares up at him.

“Leave,” he spits out. “Back to your boyfriend?”

“Yes,” Sherlock replies steadily, meeting his gaze.

Victor scoffs, walks out of the kitchen, still holding on to his shoulder. Sherlock rolls his eyes. It’s barely a graze. He watches as Victor sinks into the sofa, starts cutting another line.

“Could be here, getting blazed,” he suggests.

“Victor,” Sherlock says, loudly. “Give me a moment of your attention.”

“You have my attention, darling. Are you going to stab me again?” he looks up, smirking. God. What had Sherlock ever seen in him?

“If you ever try to contact me again,” he swallows. “I’m going to ask my brother to intervene. And you know how he is. How protective he is of me.”

Victor’s eyes widen, he drops the credit card in his hand and stands up. Makes as if to come towards him.

“I’d rather you didn’t try to touch me again. I stole a knife from your kitchen, I’m going to stab you in the throat. So. Listen to me, because I don’t think I’ll be seeing you again.”

He stops.

“This was a mistake,” he continues. “An awful mistake. It’s mine, of course. I wouldn’t expect anything less from you. I will forgive you for trying to assault me on one condition: never, ever, try to reach me again. We were done two years ago, we’re done now.”

“You’ve gone soft,” Victor comments, narrowing his eyes in disdain.

“Be that as it may,” Sherlock takes a deep breath. “For the sake of our friendship. Or whatever it was that made me love you—“

“Don’t be daft, you never loved me—“

“whatever it was. I’m going to leave everything as it is. Goodbye.”
“That’s a good payment for all this coke!” he shouts, throwing something at him. Sherlock ducks. It’s a book. Molecular physics. It lands on its front, pages all twisted underneath the cover.

Sherlock has to hurry out of the flat before he changes his mind. As it is everything seems to be folding up inside of him, crumbling to cinders. As soon as he’s outside, closing the door behind him he vomits all over the landing.

Oh well. He wipes his mouth with the back of his hand.

He wants John. He wants him so badly. He feels young again, trapped in the rain without an umbrella, feeling used and discarded and absolutely awful. Not that he was forced. He came here of his own volition. What does that make him?

A bloody idiot.

He rushes downstairs, and once he’s on the street he has no idea what to do. He can’t go home like this, can’t have John see him like this. He’ll make that face, and Sherlock will want the earth to swallow him whole. He expects it’ll be approximately two minutes before Mycroft finds him. He switches off his phone, ignoring the long list of missed calls. Mostly from John.

Does he have enough enough money for a cab? He does. Where should he go?

He has half a feeling that no matter where he goes, John will find him. Something tenuous connects them, something he doesn’t think about when he’s sober, but now that all of synapses are lighted up under the effect of narcotics, he can’t but.

Nothing else would explain this hollow in the middle of his chest, eating away at him when John isn’t there.

It starts raining.

***

He finds himself in Regent’s Park. He’d passed out there once, behind the bushes. A two day bender, without any food, would do that to someone.

***

Sits and sits, seems like hours, waiting, waiting. The high starts wearing off, his clothes start drying, and what a relief that is.

***

John finds him soon enough, his scent wrapping around him even before he can hear the leaves crunch underfoot. A metallic tinge covering the comforting buttery fragrance; worry, anger, fear. Sherlock closes his eyes and considers making a dash for it and dousing himself in the pond. The last dregs of euphoria encourage him. His heart keeps beating, stuttering and stuttering in an unsteady rhythm.

“I underestimated you,” he says to open air. John’s gait stops, a rough exhale of breath. “I figured it would take you at least another hour. Have you been speaking to Mycroft?”
“Shut up, just shut up,” John snaps behind him, and his gait quickens, and in two strides he’s directly behind Sherlock, hand curling into his shoulder, pulling him back roughly. Sherlock panics; he doesn’t want John to see him like this, it scares him. He jerks roughly out of his grasp, keeps a few paces ahead.

“Right. Okay. You don’t even want to look at me. I’ll talk, then. No calls. No texts. Your phone has been switched off for four hours. I called Lestrade to see if you’d run off for a case, and yes, I called your brother, what did you expect me to do? Wait around until your corpse washed up from the Thames?”

Sherlock feels his throat swell uncomfortably. “Don’t be dramatic.”

“What’s gotten into you? Sherlock, look at me.” His voice falters, and Sherlock feels horrible. Everything inside of him twisting into a dark ball of shame. John’s inherent goodness, trying to seek out something in Sherlock to love. And what does Sherlock give him? Broken promises?

He doesn’t struggle when John finally decides to catch up with him. He seems to decide against pulling him back and instead side steps him until they’re facing each other. He looks tired, his hair mussed up on one side, the white collar of his shirt peeking out from underneath his bottle green jumper is crooked. He’s had four drinks. He smells faintly of lager, John’s preferred alcoholic beverage. Someone tried to kiss him on the cheek, an over-eager woman. He had pulled away. Probably laughed nervously and told her to go slow with the alcohol.

Fondness, treacherous and vile, bubbles up in his chest. He wants to kiss him. Wants to apologise. Wants to tell him everything so John will just understand.

“Are you al-“ he begins, and stops. His gaze zeroes in on Sherlock’s mouth, or more precisely, somewhere a little further up. His hand comes up to touch him, when he pulls away his fingers are smeared with red.

“You’re bleeding,” he says quietly.

Oh. Sherlock hadn’t noticed. He brushes his own fingers against the skin, and they come away similarly stained. Of course. Snorting it has irritated the delicate lining of his nasal passageway, caused rupture and slight bleeding. John’s protective tenderness fans outward, instinct to find the cause of Sherlock’s pain and bash their head in.
“Are you hurt?” he asks again, earlier fury forgot, and his hands flutter about his form. Grabs him with both hands, forces him to sit back down on the bench. He slips so easily into caretaker mode, always so ready to take care of Sherlock.

A familiar memory, repeated. Déjà vu. John looks down at his face, eyes flick down the rest of his body and Sherlock’s heart is beating, beating. He doesn’t want to stay here, so still, his entire body is buzzing.

“Stop it, I’m fine,” he snaps, and pushes John away, which is the exact opposite of what he actually wants. Stands up. John regards him, confused, and hurt flickers across his eyes. He hasn’t jumped to any conclusions, yet. He must be assuming that Sherlock is in one of his moods, gripped by ennui and frustration, and is taking it out on John. Running away to secluded areas and sulking by himself.

“What happened? Sherlock, just tell me,” and John doesn’t take the hint, he comes closer, and shit, clasps his hands around Sherlock’s wrists to tug him closer to himself. Reassure with touch, try to explain to Sherlock that he is safe. John does this constantly. It always has positive effects. Not today. Right now it only serves to make him ill. Sherlock makes an irritated noise, tries to pull away from him.

“You don’t know anything, quit it, let go,” he babbles, but John’s eyes narrow, his grip doesn’t slacken. It tightens.

“Look at me,” he says, and his voice is low, dangerous. Sherlock refuses, head still inclined and gaze concentrating on a flower bed. Bright red tulips, the colour of blood. So visible in the darkness. He wants to rip them from the root.

He’s shaking.

“How much have you taken?” he prods, and his voice is still brusque. Sherlock hates the sound of his voice, it grates on his nerves. Makes him defensive.

He rips out of John’s grasp, harder this time, hard enough to manage. He shuffles from foot to foot, fingers twitch. He’ll be coming down soon, and he’ll need another fix, and John will hate him. A veritable timeline of events, dictated by logic and Sherlock’s flawless calculation. He is very seldom wrong.

“LOOK AT ME WILL YOU!” John finally shouts, and Sherlock startles, head snapping towards
“What?” he snarls. “What do you want? I’m not perfect, and now you know! Fuck,” His hands fly up, cup themselves over his face, fingers dig into the hollows above his cheekbones. His breath, quick and haphazard, stuttering out of his mouth. “I don’t know what happened. I’m sorry, I’m sorry, he was here, and I just couldn’t.”

He’s babbling, self-imposed darkness making it easier to get the words out. He doubts he’s making any sense. His coat is lost, he feels cold, wind swiping icy fingers under his shirt. John must notice this, because he’s taking off his own cardigan and wrapping it over his shoulders. Fingers curl over his wrists, pull them gently down. Sherlock still can’t look at his face, and he hates himself. John moves him this way and that, attempting to fit the cardigan over his body. He manages. He sniffs loudly, a tell tale sign of his latent rage. He doesn’t let it erupt

It’s broad in the shoulders and short at the wrists but it’s warm, John’s body heat has leached into it and now it’s leaching into Sherlock. It smells like him. It’s significantly calming, the scent of a familiar Alpha settling into his skin, his chest, telling him that comfort is nearby, that whatever terrible things have happened will soon be better.

“It’s cold. Come on, let’s go home. I’d rather you come down from this in the safety of Baker Street. Are you hurt anywhere else?”

“I don’t need you to take care of me,” Sherlock tells him, because it feels important that John know this.

“No,” John agrees. “But I want to. Will you let me?”

Sherlock finally looks up, because John deserves that, at least. He looks up and their eyes meet and Sherlock feels a constriction at his throat. John’s face, twisted into worry and disappointment, and Sherlock made him look like that. He half expects John to make a disgusted noise, call him a dirty name and push him off, but John isn’t like that. He never has been, and it truly is one of life’s great mysteries.

John’s kindness only makes him bitter and resentful now, his guilt and shame twisting into something ugly. “Nothing about you makes sense!” he suddenly shouts, and he’s pushing John away, baring his teeth. “You’re…you elude definition, I don’t like it. Always so ready to fix, put together the broken pieces and make something new. Why, John? Aren’t you happy with me the way I am? Won’t feel comfortable fucking a junkie?”
There, that feels better. Much better to have John hate him, think of him as something volatile and dangerous, something to be avoided. Sherlock has always been like that anyway, abrasive and unyielding to touch. At least the cocaine lets him be who he is.

“Come on, say something!” he urges, John’s stoic unresponsiveness making him want to lash out. He grabs him by the lapel and shakes him. John lets himself be manhandled, looks unwaveringly at Sherlock, his eyes blue and clear.

“Are you done?” he asks, when Sherlock’s shaking falters. He pushes him back gently. “Will you come home with me?”

Sherlock is furious. John won’t even do him the decency of being angry with him! Won’t even let Sherlock jerk him into submission, into reacting, into anything. He just holds on, calm and considerate and Sherlock hates him! Wants to snake himself around John, tuck his head underneath his chin and never let go.

“God, I hate you,” he says underneath his breath, fingers still curled into the wool of his jumper, and crushes his lips against John’s.

John utters a surprised mmph! And immediately tries to push him off, hands to his chest. Sherlock refuses, holds him tighter and shoves him up against a nearby tree.

“Sherlock-!” John starts, managing to pull away for a second. Cranes his neck out of Sherlock’s reach. Sherlock growls, catches his lips again, tries to snake down a hand to palm against John’s cock. He’s soft.

“Come on, why won’t you just.” he says roughly, and squeezes. John makes a strangled noise, struggles against his grip, wool catching in the rough bark. A twig snaps. A leaf shakes loose from Sherlock’s pawing and flutters about, rests in John’s hair.

“Christ, get off,” John’s stronger grip catches him about the shoulders, shoves him off with more force than necessary. Sherlock stumbles, scowls at John. The sting of rejection is sharp. Humiliating. He immediately tries to get rid of it by pouncing on John again. But he’s ready this time, grasps him by the wrist and turns him around, pins him against the tree. Bark digs into his skin. John is panting softly, his golden fringe has fallen lose and hangs over his forehead. He is careful to keep space between them.
“This is not how we handle this,” he says evenly. His eyes are icy blue.

“All that I am then? Something to be handled.”

“I didn’t say that. I said that you can’t use sex as a way of manipulating me. That’s what you’re doing. It’s wrong. Why would you do that?”

Because I don’t know any other way.

“I thought you wanted me,” he says instead. His voice is unsteady.

“I do. When you’re sober. And not trying to grab my cock when I don’t want you to.”


“It’s fine. Will you stop now? Will you let me take you home, please? Please, Sherlock.”

The fight leaves him. His head hangs, and Sherlock is so tired. He just wants to go home and sleep, curl up against John and just touch him. He doubts he’ll be able to sleep though. Might vomit all over the bed, might have to take apart the microwave and reassemble it again just to get rid of all his excess energy. It’ll make him even more sick when the crash comes.

“Sherlock,” John says softly, and his hand leaves his wrist. Sherlock arm falls. “Sherlock, I’m not angry with you, alright? I’m mad you didn’t trust me enough to tell me. I’m not mad that you had a relapse.”

He thinks it’s important that Sherlock knows this. Why? Is it important? Why is it important. He squints, tries to look at John properly. The sun is setting and John’s features are beginning to get hidden by the encroaching darkness. What is the distinction that John is trying to get at?

“I don’t understand,” he tells him honestly. “What do you—“
“Later. I’m freezing my bollocks off, and so are you.”

“I don’t-“

“I know the biology, Sherlock. You know what I mean. Come on, can you walk?”

Sherlock scoffs. “I could run all the way.”

“Yeah, don’t do that. You’ll get hit by a car.” He looks at Sherlock and smiles softly. He’s still worried, disappointed. Must be blaming himself for not being enough. Sherlock doesn’t know how to explain that the problem isn’t him, it’s deep inside of Sherlock, has taken root inside his heart and made it a poisonous place.

He ducks his head, looks at their feet, matching step for step. Warm tendrils curl around his chest. John’s hand is at the small of his back, grounding. A light breeze sifts through his hair, makes him shiver.

***

John must have picked up on the fact that he was with someone, Sherlock thinks. He’d babbled it out and now obviously John knew. Why wasn’t he demanding answers? Instead he is inside the kitchen, making tea. He knows his way around, his movements are practised, sure. He is doubtful he’ll be able to keep it down. As it is, he can feel the ominous warning signs of the crash coming.

John’s thrown a blanket over him, made him take off his filthy clothes and dressed him in his soft, worn pyjamas. Sherlock’s hands fluttered nervously throughout, his body twitching and shuddering and finding only the unyielding press of John’s body. He tried to kiss him. John had allowed it, only for a minute, fingers curling into the nape of his neck and Sherlock had started lighting up, surely that meant-

“Not like this,” John says against his mouth instead, pulls away. He tugs the t shirt down over Sherlock’s head, smooths his hands over his sides.

“You’re being so terribly unfair,” Sherlock complains. John only smiles, and it’s a little sad. Sherlock aches.
There is barely any space for conversation during what precious little remains of the evening, and well into the next day. Sherlock thinks fleetingly of telling John in the few lucid moments of his coming down, but his momentary sanity becomes overwhelmed by the usual: anger, frustration, paranoia. There is an episode where Sherlock rages and calls John “insufferable, idiotic, absolutely useless,” because he won’t let Sherlock out of the flat to get more cocaine.

John only sighs patiently, tells Sherlock that it’s a perfectly lovely Sunday, and will he let him finish his assignment? As it is he’s going to fail his graduate exam, what with spending all his time running after Sherlock on cases.

Sherlock fumes, calls him some more names, and systematically dismantles the toaster. John glances at him once in the middle of his unnecessary experiment, half heartedly tells Sherlock to be careful, and continues to scratch his pen across paper.

Ms Hudson, hearing the commotion and fearing the worst where Sherlock is concerned, pokes her head through the door. “Is everything alright, boys?” she asks. John looks up at her, gives her an annoying, winning smile, and makes a sweeping gesture at the flat. Books scattered on the floor, cigarette boxes littering every available surface. Sherlock, poised over the mangled remains of his toaster like a murderer over a corpse.

“Alright then,” she nods. “I’ll make something for you two. Something nice and healthy, get him back on his feet. You really musn’t poison your body like this dear, it wreaks havoc on your reproductive system.”

Sherlock snarls, like a rabid dog, considers the pros and cons of picking up a piece of toaster and throwing it at her. He decides against it, obviously. Years of living with an abusive Alpha husband had made her frightened of sudden movements and loud noises.

“It wreaks havoc on the toaster, more like,” John says absent mindedly, turning a page.

Sunlight filters through the window, lights up the tips of his hair. Makes it look like spun gold.

He feels marginally better a whole day letter, although admittedly that is a relative word. The drug hasn’t left his body completely, but he’s managed to keep down some scrambled eggs and get an hour of sleep. He’s still pale and shaking and rather clammy after having upended most of the contents of his stomach, but at least the haze has lifted a bit. He’s also extremely exhausted. He sleeps in short snatches, his dreams are feverish and confusing.
John is gone, left for *class* or something equally pointless. He’d wanted to stay, but it made Sherlock squirm with guilt. John takes his studies seriously, Sherlock would have too, if he’d seen any point in them. The classes barely challenge him, he’ll graduate with first class honours either way. What use his chemistry degree will be to him, though, he is unsure.

It leaves him, for the first time in a while, feeling empty. Hollowed out. The silence of the flat presses in on him from all angles. Victor’s hand at his throat, trying to push up against him. He shudders, feeling ill, tries to shake off the memory. It reminds him that John doesn’t know yet. Having ignored it for so long, Sherlock wonders if it’s better kept a secret. John hadn’t asked after it. Does he care? Is he being polite? What? Why won’t he just *ask*. Sherlock feels angry again.

He violently turns the page of an old, dusty file that Lestrade had sent him last week. He’d learnt of Sherlock’s recent relapse, sent him a text: *Might as well go over the cold cases when you’re crashing. Tell that John of yours I said hello. Don’t puke over the photographs this time.* Sherlock considered doing it, just to spite him. But he’d be unable to pick through the material if it was covered in vomit.

There is only one thing that could have possibly made him feel worse, and because the universe is cruel, it’s knocking on his door that evening.

Sherlock refuses to answer it. He ignores the buzzing, tries to piece together the evidence even with the background noise. Mycroft’s impatience bleeds through from underneath the door. Sherlock’s sensitive nose picks up the familiar notes: frustration, disappointment, the greasy undertone of smugness. He wrinkles his nose. Mycroft doesn’t use suppressants because it makes it easier for him to intimidate his tiresome political enemies, and isn’t that so convenient for him.

He could pick the lock if he really wanted. He’s the one who taught him, when he was scarcely six. It wasn’t a particularly bright idea. The ability to move through locked doors opened up several new avenues for experimentation. Much like giving fire to prehistoric man. Thousands of years of evolution coalesced into a single, spectacular event.

“Go away,” he shouts, loud enough for him to hear.

But of course, Mycroft has a spare key. Only for emergencies, of course, but for Mycroft everything is an emergency, especially after The Near Overdose Incident of 2016. The lock turns, the door swings open. The tap of his Oxfords are followed by that of his umbrella, and Sherlock feels a sudden thirst for murder.
“This is the second time you’ve passed out in Regents Park,” he chooses to begin.

Sherlock stares at a rather unflattering picture of a man lying on the ground with his throat slit open. Blood weeping from the open wound, spreading into a halo underneath his head. “I didn’t pass out. And why are you here? I’ve been seeing too much of you these days, it’s messing with my brain chemistry.”

“Withdrawal only makes the abrasive parts of your personality more tiresome,” Mycroft rejoins, undeterred, sinking into the opposite armchair comfortably. Sherlock looks up at him, glares and throws the binder in his general direction. He barely flinches, and it misses his head by at least an inch. It makes a heavy thump as it lands on the floor, sadly unbroken by Mycroft’s spherical form.

Not that he really is spherical. He’s lost weight. His diet must be working. It only makes Sherlock angrier.

Mycroft sighs, as if Sherlock is the one being troublesome, and smooths down his tie. “I only have a few minutes.”

“And yet you choose to come here and bother me,” Sherlock says brightly.

“You know why I’m here, Sherlock.” Mycroft looks at him patiently, long, tapered fingers tap against his mouth. Pale grey eyes swipe over him, pick out bits and pieces of information that Sherlock has no interest in giving. Not that it matters, Mycroft is unfortunately as brilliant as him.

Sherlock rolls his eyes and curls in tighter into himself, tucking his knees under his chin. “Yes, to bully me. Or to tell me, yet again, that you’ve failed your primary purpose and cannot bring me more suppressants. Which is it?”

Mycroft cocks his head to one side, eyes unnervingly flicking up and down his form.

“Victor Trevor was here yesterday.”

“Yes. What of it?” Sherlock immediately disentangles himself and stands up, brushes the front of his wrinkled t shirt and makes his way out of the living room. This is not a conversation he is interested
in having. “I’m making some tea. That’s not an invitation to stay. The tea is just for me.”

“Three years ago you told me not to do anything,” Mycroft says, louder so Sherlock can hear him from the kitchen. Sherlock sets his jaw, tries not to react. Mycroft is waiting for him to react. His hands shake while he fills the kettle.

“I respected your wishes. I left him alone, even though it would have taken me five seconds to make sure he never saw you again. And now, because of your misplaced benevolence, he’s returned, and made a mess of you a second time. I’m not here to ask your permission. I am informing you-“

“No, ” the word comes barrelling out of his throat. He rushes back into the living room, stops short a few steps from Mycroft. He points his finger at him, rage making him tremble. “You don’t get to micromanage me a second time. I made a mistake. It was my mistake. Stop trying to blame other people for the things I do. I’m not a child, Mycroft!”

“Why are you so determined to defend that worthless excuse for a human being?” Mycroft asks, and he loses a bit of his composure. Frustration bleeds through, makes him widen his eyes. He honestly sounds baffled. “The only reason he isn’t in prison right now is because you asked me to stay out of it. I am no longer staying out of it. He is a liability, William. I am going to get rid of him.” His thin mouth hardens into a straight line and he looks at Sherlock, chin tipped up. Dares him to argue.

“You will not- “

“Does John know?”

His mouth shuts with an audible clack. “That is none of your business,” Sherlock snaps. “How dare you come here and- and-“ he makes a vague gesture with his hands, which he hopes Mycroft understands to mean make a nuisance of yourself.

“He doesn’t then,” Mycroft takes a deep breath, picks up a discarded newspaper (John’s, not his. He barely ever reads the paper) flicks through it distractedly. “I understand he took you home. I find it surprising he didn’t ask where you were, or where you obtained the cocaine from. Or did you lie?”

“I find it surprising you think I have to answer to you,” Sherlock echoes, and because he’s exhausted and this conversation is making him even more tired, his knees give out and he falls back into the chair. Leans his head back and groans, irritated. “I’m going to tell John. Just not- I’ll tell him.”
"Tell me what?"

Oh.

Well, fuck. How much of that had he heard?

"John," Mycroft greets him smoothly, turning around to give him one of his more pleasant smiles, but doesn’t get up. His eyes follow him as John walks into the living room, closing the door behind himself, looking between the two of them like he’s afraid one of them is about to burst. His backpack, hanging on his fingers, slides to the floor. A creature of habit, John leans over and places a kiss on Sherlock’s cheek; doesn’t think much of it. He squeezes his shoulder as he does so. It’s meant as a gesture of comfort, of solidarity. John must have picked up on Sherlock’s unease and tried to assuage it. Warmth blooms in his chest, despite himself.

"Hullo, Mycroft. Haven’t seen you in a while,” John calls out from the kitchen. There’s the clink of ceramic and glassware. Making tea for his ponce of a brother. Ever polite. “Should I be worried?”

“I imagine you’re worried all the time, having to pull my brother half dead out of various places. Tell me John, have you attempted to persuade him to join rehab?”

Mycroft meets his eyes when he says this, mouth pulls into a bland smile. Sherlock’s fingers curl around the television remote embedded into the chair cushions, picks it up and makes a threatening gesture as if to lob it at Mycroft’s head.

“Rehab?” John says the word like he’s testing it. He doesn’t want to side with Mycroft, but Sherlock isn’t an idiot. John is a medical student, he would understand the benefits of detoxifying at a rehabilitation centre. Still, they’ve only discussed it once and Sherlock had flown into a panic, promising John that he’ll stay sober, and don’t try to send me there, please. “Not particularly. And I don’t want to discuss that right now. Why don’t you have a cup of tea and we can have a nice talk about political crises and emulsifiers.”

John’s tone is light, trying to diffuse the tense atmosphere with good humour. He comes back after a few seconds, places two steaming mugs on the coffee table. “Did I miss the two of you snapping at each other like wild dogs? Shame.”

He picks up the newspaper Mycroft was pretending to read a while ago, flicks it open while walking away. Hand pets over Sherlock’s curls while he passes him. He sets himself on the sofa, stretches
onto it. He always fits perfectly. Sherlock has to curl a bit or his ankles will hang off the edge. Sometimes the angle is awkward when they’re trying to snog there.

Mycroft seems to note the ease with which John moves in the flat, and his eyes narrow. He turns away immediately, fixes Sherlock with another Look, sighs, and picks up the mug of tea.

He says scarce little after that, deciding not to betray Sherlock’s confidences and discuss Victor in front of John. He knows Sherlock would never forgive him if he did that. He blows gently on his tea, sips it. “I hope you aren’t missing classes, your attendance is startlingly low as it is, it’s a surprise they haven’t thrown you out yet,” he comments.

*Only because you keep throwing money at them, and I’m one of their most brilliant students, he thinks, but doesn’t say.*

Instead he rolls his eyes. “I hope you know you’re taking advantage of John’s hospitality, not mine. I wasn’t even going to make you tea.”

“I’m aware. Routine is rather comforting, isn’t it? One becomes rather accustomed to it, but it takes precious little for it to fall apart.” He puts down his tea cup and smiles. It doesn’t reach his eyes.

***

“Well, that was…intense,” John comments after Mycroft’s left, shut the door behind him. Lingering notes of his scent still stay in the air, not making Sherlock feel any less unsettled.

“No need to use polite words when Mycroft is concerned,” Sherlock assures him, quickly standing up. It makes his head spin for a moment. John is *right there*, looking lovely and warm and Sherlock wants nothing more than to curl up next to him and stay there. They haven’t touched properly for the past two days, what with Sherlock snapping and snarling and being generally unpleasant. Mycroft had sent anti-anxiety medication the next day. Sherlock decided he was having a laugh at his expense and binned them. He wishes he could have binned the nurse who came to take a blood sample as well. Unfortunately John had agreed with Mycroft on that particular issue. “I know you didn’t use a needle, but it’s just routine. Let him do it, yeah?”

John turns to look up at him, eyes wide and curious. There’s an ink stain under his jaw, splotchy and blue, breaking the continuity of his skin. Sherlock feels like licking at it.

“Going somewhere?”
His tone doesn’t imply any sort of accusation, but Sherlock reads it as such anyway. The air between them feels so tense, it makes him ill. “Yes,” he replies, voice unsteady. “To my room. Don’t bother me.”

“Sherlock-“

John must want to talk, it would only be natural. It’s been almost two days since they’ve discussed it, and John has been patient, unerringly so, giving Sherlock time to come down from the high, been indulgent while he crawled at the walls and hurled insults at John, or sank into dark moods, curled up on the sofa, refusing to engage with anybody.

John has been kinder to him than he deserved, and Sherlock doesn’t know what to do with it.

He doesn’t try to stop him when Sherlock turns around to sweep into his room. He only sighs deeply, and the sound of it makes Sherlock feel guilty.

He’s shaking again, whether from withdrawal or something else, he’s unsure. Nothing else seems particularly attractive at the moment, so he crawls into his bed, pulls the covers up over his ears and closes his eyes.

***

Sherlock’s dreams are vivid, as expected, and slightly terrifying. He dreams about Victor’s hair before he cropped it short, when it was long and floppy and would curl over his eyes. His pale fingers against Victor’s tanned ones, trying to lace them together but instead Victor reaches for his throat. Sherlock tries to dart out of the way, his mouth opens around John’s name. John, synonymous for so many things.

John, help me

John, kiss me

John, make me a cup of tea would you?

John, I’m scared

John, I’m lonely
Victor’s teeth turn pointed, his fingers curling into claws. Sherlock’s throat seizes with terror and he just can’t get far enough. John, John, what is happening? Help me. Please. Help me.

I can’t, John says, even though he’s standing right there. He’s wearing the same shirt he was wearing when Sherlock first met him. His shirt is damp, and so is his hair, sticking to his forehead. Do you always wake people up like that? Only strange men who fall asleep on my sofa.

Sherlock’s eyes blink open, it takes him a few moments to adjust to the darkness. He seems to have fallen asleep for more than two hours. He stares at the ceiling, the fan turns gently. The sheets are soaked with sweat.

Dreams, always defying logic, making no sense. It’s one of the few areas Sherlock finds he cannot understand. He sits up, wipes a shaking hand across his bow. It comes away wet. His cheeks are wet too. He feels disgusting. He hasn’t woken up crying from a nightmare since he was a child.

The room is shrouded with darkness, and the door is closed. It makes Sherlock feel terribly sad. So many secrets, so many terrible things curled up inside of him. Why can’t he just make it easier for himself? He wants to go to John, on the other side of the door, probably reading a textbook and making notes, sitting with a cup of tea. Wondering when Sherlock will come out. Always so patient, his John. Other Alphas wouldn’t have stood for this. Sherlock was attractive, yes, but no one wants an omega who’s prone to self destruction and rather mouthy.

Wait a moment… his John?

They haven’t been together long enough for Sherlock to…people don’t belong to people, Sherlock has always believed that. It’s not fair for him to be covetous of John. Since when did he start thinking of him that way, anyway? When did that possessive pronoun slip through, claim John as his own? When did fondness and comfort morph into…whatever it was that pushed Sherlock to regard John with greediness?

A knock breaks the uncomfortable train of Sherlock’s thought. Unfortunately, it only tips over into slight panic. “Sherlock, it’s been three hours. Are you alright? Can I come in?”

“Yes. No,” Sherlock answers immediately, in order.

“Right. Well. Will you eat something? We need to get something inside of you.”
The wording makes him giggle, despite himself. It breaks through the thin barrier of trepidation. “Rather,” he mutters. “I’m not hungry,” he continues, louder.

“This is getting ridiculous. Open the door. I’m not talking to you like this.”

Sherlock sighs, falls back against the pillows. They’re still a bit icky. “Come in, then,” he calls, and the door clicks open. He hadn’t locked it. He could have. Perhaps he didn’t really want the barrier between the two of them to be permanent. Giving John the choice to come in, if he wanted to. But John doesn’t do things like that without asking. Thresholds mean something to him.

He shuts the door behind himself, the thin sliver of light that had illuminated the room is gone and its thrown into darkness again. Sherlock continues staring at the ceiling, at the slowly rotating fan. It’s too cold to need it, but the squeaky sound of loose screws was comforting. He didn’t want complete silence.

The bed dips where John sits down on it. There’s a soft thud of he sets down a glass on the bedside table.

“Tea?” Sherlock asks the ceiling.

“Hmm. Not for you though. You’ll get some when you decide to come out of this room.”

A soft exhale of breath, and then, John stretching out next to him. He smells nice; recently taken a bath. Sherlock likes it when John showers here; John uses his bodywash and shampoo and he smells like Sherlock. It makes a possessive thrill light up in his belly.

“Unfair,” Sherlock sniffs. Their hands lie next to each other on the bed, not touching. John doesn’t close the distance between the two of them. He’s being careful. Cautious. Afraid Sherlock will lash out. It’s not a far off deduction; Sherlock is known to be unpredictable.

“I..” he begins, unsure of how to continue. “Are you angry? With me?”

Finally, John’s fingers inch across the space separating them and he links his fingers with Sherlock’s. Sherlock’s throat swells and it’s an instinctive reaction; tightening his grip, taking comfort when it is offered. John makes it so terribly easy. His warmth spreads through Sherlock, and it feels like home.
“No. But I wish you’d told me. You…you’re just so closed off all the time, you never tell me what’s bothering you. Tell me. Tell me what I can do to help.”

Always the same question, and Sherlock never has answers.

Sherlock’s heart thunders under his ribs. Something twists uncomfortably in his gut. John’s open vulnerability, it’s like cold air nipping at unprotected skin. He shakes his head minutely, and then turns over on his side. John immediately does the same. John’s eyes shine in the dark, the dim shape of his mouth is downturned. He lifts the hand that isn’t clasped into Sherlock’s and brushes his knuckles across a cheekbone. Sherlock’s eyes flutter closed.

“Just…be quiet. And listen. Will you do that?”


“Okay. Good,” Sherlock lets go of his hand, turns so he’s lying on his back again, raises his attention to everything else in the room except John. John aches to touch him; he can tell. He can feel his trepidation. Sherlock is scaring him. He’s afraid of what he’ll say next. Perhaps holding John would make this easier, but…no. It’s more simple to pretend he’s telling all of this to empty air, ignore that John is listening and drinking in every word.

“I Presented when I was fifteen,” he starts. Stops. “I-“ swallows once or twice before he can start again. Oh god. He’s really doing this.

“I had a friend. His name was Victor Trevor.”

John is unearthly quiet, he barely even moves. How long he’ll be able to keep that up, Sherlock is unsure.

“He was my only friend, really. We met when we were scarcely children. I was, at least. Victor’s always been…well, I never particularly regarded him as a child. He seemed much more grown up than me. He was smart.”
These are the easy parts: the exposition. Things could go either way from here. Sherlock realises he could stop, end the story here and keep the secrets between the two of them. Instead he licks his lips and continues.

He keeps talking, words start flowing out of his mouth more easily. Tells him about Victor’s copper hair, his crooked smile, his rough hands pushing him up against a desk, his mocking smile when Sherlock would try to hook his arms around his neck. Once he starts, he can’t seem to stop. His voice trembles at certain points and he has to pause, take deep, shuddering breaths. John’s hand twitches once or twice, but Sherlock raises a finger to stop him. If John will touch him, Sherlock will stop, and he’ll never be able to get all of this out.

“I think I was lonely,” he says quietly. “Of course, it must not make sense. I abhorred sentiment. Perhaps I didn’t so much, not then. It seemed the only way of keeping a friend. I realise now it must sound ridiculous. I should have known better. It wasn’t so obvious to me, then. Science was easy to understand. Human behaviour is much more complex. We’re so prone to making errors.”

“Sherlock.”

“You promised you would be quiet.”

John’s mouth closes after that. Sherlock continues. Victor off in university, shagging god knows who, because he was attractive, and charming, and could have anyone he wanted, but he kept coming back and finding Sherlock available, waiting. Sherlock leaving his little town and finding London, alive and pulsing and there were so many things to do and yet he always came back to Victor.


John’s anger, hot and unwavering, curling around them both. It’s not directed at him.

“We stopped talking for weeks, months, it went on for two years. Or was it three? Either way. I couldn’t…I knew he was awful for me. I knew. There was nothing about him that deserved my attention. My friendship. Why should I? All he knew to do was hurt me. And I let him, I always let him—” his voice trembles again and he has to sit up. John follows suit, his hands hover above his shoulders like he wants to anchor Sherlock to the here and now. He can feel Sherlock slipping away. Sherlock wants, he wants it so badly but he needs to get all of this out. How can he ever expect proper closure if John doesn’t know?
His cheeks feel damp.

“And that day... when you’d left. Gone to the pub-“ Sherlock draws his knees up to chest, clasps his arms around his legs and rests his chin on his knees. Sways gently. This is the hardest part isn’t it? It almost seems like confessing a betrayal.

“He came back. He- I don’t know what he wanted. Me, I suppose. But not in that sense. He was angry, and frustrated, and he wanted to take it out on me. Fuck his own desperation into me, I suppose.”

John tenses. “Did he-“

“Quiet, John. No, he didn’t. And don’t be tedious, you know I can defend myself. You’ve seen the Judo certificate. Victor knew that too. I never used to put up a fight, so he was surprised when the first punch landed. I told him to leave. He mocked me, of course. Told me I’d gone soft,” Sherlock laughs, and it comes out all wrong. Wet and guttural. He experimentally touches his hand to the softer skin of his cheek, and it comes away wet. He wipes hurriedly at his nose. “God, I just wanted him gone. I told him so many times. And then he- he asked me. If I wanted a hit. He had some. Premium cocaine, the very best, extremely expensive. The rest must be obvious. I wasn’t strong enough. I attempted to resist, but then I gave myself so many platitudes and it just... seemed easy. To break a promise.”

He stops. Silence stretches between the two of them, dark and impenetrable. John’s hand rests next to him, fingers just barely brushing against his thigh.

“I loved him, I suppose. After a fashion. Not like-“ something horrible and stupid bubbles up in his throat and he pushes it down. What on earth. “Not like you’d think,” he finishes lamely. He hopes John hadn’t caught the hitch in the conversation. “Infatuation morphing into something even more juvenile. Dependence, I think. Rejection made me bitter, and I had nothing to distract me anymore, and I just... spiralled. I had a trust fund, but obviously Mycroft wouldn’t let me use it to buy drugs. I found other ways.”

Shame pinkens his cheeks. John doesn’t say anything, obediently remaining quiet while Sherlock speaks. But he has nothing more to say. His lips purse closed, and he wraps his arms tighter around himself. He doesn’t feel any different. What had he thought would happen? It would take out all the vile things inside of Sherlock, clean out the rot in his chest, make him whole and perfect again? Apparently not. All it’s succeeded in doing is making Sherlock feel rather hollow.

The silence becomes stifling. Why won’t John say something? Perhaps this has all been a huge
mistake. Of course John won’t want him now. It practically sounds like he’s in love with someone else. He tried to make it sound like he wasn’t, that Victor was just a means to an end. A distraction, a juvenile infatuation. He’s not sure if he’s managed to convey it properly.

“Can I,” John stops, seemingly choosing his words carefully. “Can I touch you?”

Oh. That’s…unexpected. Sherlock sniffs.

“Yes.”

John’s arm comes up behind him, curls behind his back and rests on his shoulder. Fingers brush the longer hair curling under his ear. Sherlock sighs, leans into the touch offered. Finally. He disentangles his arms from his knees and stretches his legs out in front of him. They both push back against the bedrest, and Sherlock’s head rolls onto John’s shoulder. He wants to press his nose to his neck, right underneath his chin, scent him there, force himself to feel calmer.

He wants. Suddenly he’s twisting, turning over until he’s hovering over John, pulling him down until he’s lying on the pillows, Sherlock perched over him.

“Sherlock-“ John starts, and he’s lifting his hands, brushing at Sherlock’s cheeks, trying to wipe away the remnants of tears, and no, Sherlock doesn’t want his pity. He wants John’s hands, his mouth, wants to press their bodies together until nothing separates them. He tries to say this, not in so many words, by roughly pressing their lips together. He writhes on top of him, tries to push his crotch against John’s, takes his wrists and pins them up against the bed.

“Want you,” he growls. “Please.”

“Sherlock, I-“

“I’m seeking physical comfort after making a heavy emotional confession, I think this is practically expected. You’re not taking advantage of me, I am asking for this, now god, please, kiss me. ”

And he really does need it, god. Two days of only having Victor’s touch burned into his memory again, and it made him sick. John looks up at him, eyes wide, lips parted. He swallows, and Sherlock follows the bob of his Adam’s Apple hungrily. John notices his expression, his eyes grow dark with want. Good, finally. He rips out of Sherlock’s grasp and catches him around the waist, turns them
around until he has Sherlock pinned beneath him. Oh. That’s good.

“We’ve never done it here before, have we?” he asks breathlessly. How apt. They haven’t done much else besides using their hands a bit, on the sofa, in the armchairs. Twice at John’s flat. John, always careful, keeping his distance, asking _is this okay_ every few minutes. Those things don’t seem to matter anymore. He reaches forward and cups his hands over John’s ears. The golden hair tickles his fingertips.

“No,” John agrees, and sweeps down to kiss him.

“How apt. They haven’t done much else besides using their hands a bit, on the sofa, in the armchairs. Twice at John’s flat. John, always careful, keeping his distance, asking _is this okay_ every few minutes. Those things don’t seem to matter anymore. He reaches forward and cups his hands over John’s ears. The golden hair tickles his fingertips.

“No,” John agrees, and sweeps down to kiss him.

“Can I just. Can I just say something?” he asks, sucking on Sherlock’s bottom lip, hips start to rock against Sherlock’s. He has his hands underneath Sherlock’s shirt, lightly scratching at his ribs.

“Why?” Sherlock asks, lifts his hips up in invitation, hooks a leg around John’s waist.

“I don’t think any less of you. You know that right?” He stops kissing him for a moment, hovers above him resting his weight on his palms. Sherlock pants softly underneath him, the seat of his pyjamas already growing wet. He looks up, warmth curls somewhere in his stomach, starts pulsing through his body. “It doesn’t matter to me, any of it. Except that someone hurt you and that makes me want to hurt _them_. Very badly. The way you think…you always blame yourself. But you’re blameless, here. You didn’t do anything wrong, you were just a kid, and…and it doesn’t matter to me,” he repeats.

“John,” Sherlock says quietly. “Kiss me, please.”

John blinks, and then smiles slowly, reaches down and put his mouth on Sherlock’s again. Presses closer, pins him with the weight of his body, and it’s _delicious_. Sherlock’s fingers weave into his hair, mouth falls open and John’s tongue slips inside of him, filthy and competent and just the right amount of rough. He always kisses with single minded focus, like his soul objective is to make Sherlock absolutely mad with desire.

Sherlock arches his back, pushing himself as much as possible against him. His head against the pillows, throat bared in an act of submission. It comes naturally to him. It doesn’t feel wrong, it feels _natural_. John groans at the sight, mouths down his neck, lightly nips the spot where a bond mark should be. The scent of arousal floods the room, John’s erection thick and heavy and still maddeningly _inside his jeans_, presses against Sherlock’s thigh.
“Can I, can I,” John asks, lifting the hem of his shirt. Sherlock nods quickly, nearly knocks John in the eye with his elbow in his haste to get his t-shirt off.

“Easy,” John laughs, and helps him tug it over his head. Immediately their lips meet again, quicker, rougher. More desperate. John makes urgent noises while his hands crawl over his abdomen, press in at the dips of his ribs, and then brush his nipples, ever so softly. Sherlock gasps at that, hips twitching, arse grinding into the wet mess beneath him. John makes a low noise, much like a satisfied cat, and pinches a nipple harder, closes his mouth around the other one.

“Oh God,” he cries out, tries to reach for John’s jumper. “Why on earth- get this off, now,” he commands, and John relents, grinning. Sits up, effectively straddling Sherlock’s hips. Sherlock squirms underneath him, pushes his crotch up and against, rubbing himself off. John stills him with a hand at the thigh, jumper bunched about his shoulders. “Would you give me a second- “ he breathes, and there, it’s off. Sherlock’s mouth waters, his runs his hands over John’s chest, compact strength, barely any softness, all wiry muscle.

He pulls him down by the nape of his neck, and John kisses him while he slips off Sherlock’s pyjamas. “Ah, fuck,” Sherlock whispers when John wraps his hand around his cock. It sends shivers all over his body, delighted little twitches. He’s making a mess of himself, leaking everywhere. He’s not even in heat. John kisses his shoulder, starts pulling him slowly. It’s small enough to fit perfectly into his hand, all enveloped in warmth, John’s calluses brushing over the hypersensitive flesh.

“Please, please,” Sherlock says, unsure what he’s begging for. Release? John’s cock inside of him?

Does he want that?

He should…John must be wanting it by now. Should he…? How should he bring it up?

“You’re thinking so much,” John says quietly, fondly. Kisses his temple. “Can I put my mouth on you?”

Sherlock wants to point on that John already has his mouth on him, until the real meaning of the words hit him. He flushes, heat courses through his body. Alphas don’t usually do that. Orgasm is achieved better through penetration. Isn’t it? That’s what he’s always heard. Victor never did that. No one else did, either. Sucking cock was an Omega’s prerogative. They enjoyed it, were supposed to enjoy it.
“I-“ Sherlock swallows. “You don’t have to.”


God, does John even know what he sounds like when he says things like that? Sherlock breathes heavily, doesn’t realise he’s been frantically fucking John’s fist all the while. “Yes, alright, I suppose,” he whispers, and John smiles triumphantly, kissing him on the mouth before he starts trailing his mouth down. Down, down his chest, a peck on a nipple, a little bite against his ribs. Until he’s breathing hot and humid against his erect cock. His thumb smears over the head, Sherlock jerks, makes an embarrassing noise.

“Do it, do it, please,” he warbles, and John slips his mouth obediently over him.

Oh, that’s different. That’s fantastic, actually. Sherlock’s cock fits perfectly inside John’s mouth, and it’s brilliant. Why has he never experimented with this before? John slips off after sucking him for a while, and then licks a stripe up the shaft, tongue curls around the tip. Sherlock is leaking profusely. His fingers curl tight into the sheets, and he’s trying not to be greedy and shove himself inside, but he can’t help it. This is beyond amazing. Suddenly, John sits up, kneels, and hooks his arms under Sherlock’s hips.

Sherlock gasps softly at the sudden movement, watches dazedly as John hooks his legs over his shoulders, and bends down again to take Sherlock’s cock into his mouth. This is…a far better angle, because it means John can slip a hand down and cup his arse, and then dip his fingers inside the wet mess at his hole.

“Fuck, ” Sherlock hisses, and moans. “That’s…shit, don’t stop.”

His back arches, heels dig into John’s back. Hands hook under his knees, push his legs back against his chest and spread him wider. It feels oddly exposed but…nice. Safe. Sherlock is normally unaccustomed to the feeling, but he is growing to appreciate it. John’s mouth bobs on his cock, it’s not large enough to pose much of a challenge for him, so he doesn’t have to come back up for air like Sherlock usually does when he does the same to John.

Fingers inside of him, pumping in and out. Wetness leaking everywhere, then being pushed back in with each inward twist.
“Ah, ah,” Sherlock pants, open mouthed, heat crawling up his body, wrapping around him. One hand reaches for John’s hair, gives the blond follicles a tug, another is curled tightly around the bedpost. He doesn’t know what he’s doing, only that he must be pulling quite hard, but John doesn’t seem to mind. His lips vibrate with a laugh when Sherlock twists his head rather violently. It’s not his fault, John is just doing spectacular things with his tongue.

He crooks his fingers and there, that spot inside of him. Something like electricity arcs up his body, shines brightly in front of his eyes. “That good?” John asks, pulling off wetly for a second.

“Severe…understatement,” Sherlock manages to gasp, eyes screwing shut.

“Keep your eyes open, now,” John warns him teasingly, leans forward to nip his bottom lip. Sherlock immediately obeys, can’t help but do it when John uses that voice. A satisfied smile graces his features and he goes back to scooping his cock into the cradle of his lips. Doesn’t take long after that. Three fingers inside of him, a steady rhythm, broken occasionally when he twists or presses. A hand creeps up his abdomen and pinches a nipple between his thumb and index finger, and yes, that-

“I’m going to come,” Sherlock says helplessly, wonderingly, like John is a force of nature, lighting up every pore of his skin.

John makes a rumbling noise, sucks hard, and Sherlock starts tipping, falling over the edge. The pressure builds and builds and he’s coming, he’s coming, John climbs over his body and kisses him, mouth capturing his moans.

He can feel the rapid movement of John’s wrist, touching himself to completion, lips snatch kisses over his cheekbones, the corner of his bottom lip, his chin.

“Christ, christ,” he breathes against his mouth, quickening his own pace while Sherlock is arching, crying out, fingers digging bruises into John’s shoulder, wetness everywhere. Warm fluid splashes over his chest, paints his abdomen with streaks, timed perfectly with his own ejaculation. He comes on John’s stomach, wetness gushes out of his arse in thick streams. His legs tighten their hold around John’s back while the paroxysms continue. It seems endless.

“John, John, oh, god,” he whispers, burying his teeth into his neck.

“That’s it, I’ve got you now,” John whispers soothingly when the aftershocks begin to subside. A hand brushes gently down the side of his face, pushes his damp curls away from his eyes, fingers
brush over drying tear tracks. He pants hard against Sherlock’s temple, his breath shifts the hair that waves over his ear. “Jesus, you gorgeous thing,” he whispers, sounding almost reverent. His lips brush the top of his ear.

“Oh that’s,” Sherlock sighs, and sort of…goes limp. His limbs, long and gangly and wrapped around John, seem to be there, but he doesn’t know how to let go. It’s like his whole mind has been wiped blank. “Good,” he finishes, and John giggles, ducks his head against Sherlock’s neck, kisses him there too.

“Very high praise coming from you,” he jokes, and gently curls his hand around Sherlock’s ankles and disentangles them from his body. Sherlock suddenly feels bereft- why is John not touching him anymore? But he’s only moving, rearranging them both so he can lie next to him, half dragging Sherlock so he can lie comfortably draped across his damp chest. They’re both filthy and covered in semen and his body’s natural lubricant. It feels incandescent.

Sherlock buries his head there, breathes in John’s natural scent. His hand slides across his stomach, curls over a hip and he pulls him closer. His hand scrapes over rapidly cooling come, but it doesn’t matter. Nothing matters except the fact of their closeness, John’s arm under his head, and god, he still wants him, even after the worst.

John’s fingers find Sherlock’s hair, comb through the sweaty curls.

“You are permitted,” he says after a while. “To ask questions.”

John’s fingers still, and he exhales roughly. “We don’t have to. If you don’t want to.”

Sherlock snorts, a bit inelegantly. “You have questions, I presume.”

“I suppose, yeah.”

“I would expect nothing less. You can ask them.”

John resumes his petting, moves on to other parts of his skin. Blunt fingernails scratch against his back. “Is he why. You got into all of that. Drugs.”
“He was part of it, but I’d rather not give Victor so much credit. Cocaine was a stimulant. I needed it to stop the noise in my head. When it got too much. And it did, very often.”

John hums, and he’s quiet for a while. Sherlock drifts, but a tad uneasily, waiting for the next question.

“And now? What happens now? With him?”

Something about John’s tone sets off warning bells in his head. Sherlock gets up, although he’s loathe to do so, to get away from the warmth of John’s body. He sits up, kneels next to John. John looks slightly alarmed, and does the same. They both regard each other for a second, John leaning back against his palms.

“If he knows what’s good for him,” Sherlock says slowly. “He’ll stay away. Mycroft has informed me that if he does come near me again, he’ll…do whatever he does to people who piss him off. I don’t know, have him deported.”

Something dark flashes in John’s eyes. His nostrils flare. He doesn’t realise when he does that, when his Alpha instincts bleed through; protectiveness, possessiveness. The need to keep Sherlock safe and unhurt. “That seems fair.”

“Because I told him,” Sherlock continues, because perhaps this is the most important part of all this, the part that means the most to John. “Because I told him to stay away. I think, perhaps, he needed to hear it in person to believe that I wanted nothing more to do with him. I left, when I realised what I was doing. I left.”

“I want to say something,” John says, tongue darts out to lick his lips. “But I think it’s the last thing you want to hear. So, to confirm,” he shrugs. “What is the last thing you want to hear?”

Sherlock’s lip twitches. Curls into a slight smile. “That if you ever see him, you’ll break his neck. Shoot him through the eyes. That kind of thing. I appreciate the sentiment, but it’s completely unnecessary, and overly dramatic.”

John’s hands find his, and they lace together immediately. “I would, though. Just so you know. I would. And that’s not because it’s written into my biology, or some rubbish. Does it…does it bother you, what I would do to people who hurt you? That I feel that way?”
So contradictory, his John. More than the sum of his parts. Tenderness and rage and vulnerability all fit into one compact human being. How does he always know the right things to say, the things that make Sherlock’s heart beat a thousand different ways?

“No. Not you. I just…don’t want you to see me as someone who…needs protection.”

“Sherlock,” John says softly, tucks an errant curl behind his ear. “That is not at all how I see you. Christ, if you had any idea. You’re brutal. The way you are…it terrifies me, sometimes. That I get to have someone like you. That you chose…me, of all people. And what you told me, it makes me angry that someone you trusted didn’t see how special you were and hurt you and made you feel terrible, that’s all. You’re not weak. Fuck, have you seen yourself? You’re…I don’t know. Like fire. Shit, that doesn’t make sense. I don’t know how to explain. It hurts to look at you sometimes, like looking at the sun. Does that make sense? Probably not.”

The admission makes Sherlock’s mouth fall open. Tiny fireworks light up all over his skin. Bewilderment, panic, fear all curl around his ribs, hold tight. Emotions grind against each other and the sound is deafening.

What on earth does that even mean? Sherlock doesn’t know. He can’t tell. He’s never been very good at this. Why isn’t he good at this?

“I—” he shakes his head, blinks several times.

“You look like you’ve seen a ghost. Relax, you don’t have to say anything back. How do you feel?” John starts slipping off the bed, one foot on the floor already, bending down to pick up his shirt. “You up for some dinner?”

And just like that, he takes away the necessity of reply. Gives Sherlock an opportunity to regain himself, take back some control. John makes him feel so flayed open and vulnerable, like one push could send him teetering off the edge of a cliff. It’s terrifying, for someone to hold so much power over you. Maybe that’s what Mycroft meant when he said that love wasn’t an advantage.

Wait, what?

No, he’d said caring wasn’t an advantage. Hadn’t he?
“No, John, I.” He stops, clears his throat. John pauses in the process of slipping the shirt over his shoulders. It makes Sherlock realise he’s still naked, and he self consciously draws the sheet more closely over his body. “I,” he starts again, and the words feel like they’re choking him. Deciding against another attempt to finish the sentence, he leans forward and presses his lips to John’s. Brushes a hand over his jaw, holds the side of his face more securely. Swallows and pulls away a bit, chooses to frame John’s head with both of his hands, slide them downward so his thumbs rest against the hollows of his cheeks. Foreheads slot against one another, they breathe in tandem.

“What you said. That...thing,” he closes his eyes, makes it easier to speak. Teeth close over his bottom lip and his fingers lace themselves behind John’s neck. “That’s. Um. Good.”

What? That was decidedly not what Sherlock had meant to say. What he had meant to say was a little bit more poetic, a little less like random words strung together. He shakes his head, heaves a frustrated sigh and tries again. “What I mean is-”

“Oh shut up, you great big idiot,” John laughs, and it sounds a bit like relief. He wraps his arms around Sherlock’s shoulders and pulls him forward until he’s crushing Sherlock to himself. It knocks a bit of his breath out before he does the same, reaches around to grip John’s waist. Slowly, cautiously, he leans his head against John’s shoulder. Shifts a little so he’s tucked against the crook of his neck. John’s hand slides into his hair, cups the back of his head. “God, you’re such a tit for someone so brilliant,” he huffs into his ear. Sherlock feels something suspiciously like a sob build up in his throat. His fingers dig deep into John’s back and he burrows even deeper into him. Wishes he could just build a home there, in the hollow of John’s chest, and stay there. It should feel uncomfortable, being so exposed after sex, with semen drying tacky and disgusting on his skin, a sheet precariously hiding his lower body from view. It should feel so many things. It doesn’t.

Sherlock is just starting to learn that it can be this way, too.

***
Wondering what Victor Trevor looks like in this fic?

I also have a Twitter now, and I'm not very good at doing Twitter-y things, but come follow me if you like!
Patroclus

Chapter Summary

It pleases him, in a dark, hungry sort of way. Sherlock should always look like that. Like something that belongs to him. Immediately he grimaces inwardly at the thought.

Chapter Notes

Some sexism in this chapter, tread carefully.
OA- Omega Activists

Thank you, Chemical_Defect, for a super quick beta!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

I will never be
the first
of so many things
for you. I came too late,
after life and love were woven into the
tapestry
of your existence. I care not
for lost firsts,
but I will fight, knuckles
bloody and teeth sharpened,
for your lasts.

- Tylor Knott Gregson
The past week had been exhausting as hell, and the only thing that had got John through it was the prospect of seeing Sherlock after class today. His internal assessments over, assignments handed in, and an entire weekend full of possibilities: the idea is enough to make him giddy.

Sherlock had only sent him a vague text which read “That park near the café. 2:00. SH”. John had sent him a follow up text, asking him what the hell he was talking about, but he soon realised this was his roundabout way of asking John to meet him. He doesn’t know where the “park near the café is” but he decides he’ll just have to find it. Sherlock doesn’t reply to his “?” message, probably because he’s drifted off and lost in thought, and hasn’t considered checking his bloody mobile.

He walks out of the classroom, checking his mobile to see if Sherlock had sent him any more texts. Anything that would let him know exactly where Sherlock wanted John to meet him. No such luck. He tells Craig who’s walking behind him that he’ll meet him after an hour, and makes his way outside campus. It’s a twenty minute walk from here to the only park that is in a nearby radius, and he’s hoping that Sherlock doesn’t mean something that’s kilometres and kilometres away.

Suddenly something (someone) pushes into him and he’s being pinned up against the nearest wall, which he makes out to be inside some filthy alley lined with bins. He had just been walking on the opposite street.

“What-“ he splutters, and he can feel his mobile slipping from his grasp and skittering to the ground. He rams an elbow back and pushes it into the person’s face, hitting the sharp ridge of a cheekbone, and they rear back, clutching their cheek.

“Wilkes?” John gapes at the man, who stands up, gasping. John would recognise the pale skin and the crooked teeth anywhere. He got in a good punch, his cheekbone has a purple bruise. The older ones have since faded, but it’s no matter, John will find a way to give him a few more.

“What the fuck, you twat? You want another go then?” John peels away from the wall and gets closer to him, makes his way into his personal space. Rage starts bubbling in his gut, instinct raising the hair at the back of his neck and making his blood run hot. This is an Alpha who was a threat to Sherlock, who’d hurt him, who’d tried to assault him. The dark voice inside his head is already encouraging him to put a hand on his throat and squeeze, eliminate the threat.

Wilkes glares at him, vibrating with restless energy, shifting from one foot to another. He looks worse than the last time John saw him: skinnier with dark circles under his eyes, and his hair hasn’t been cut in a while. This is a far cry from the well-groomed, posh looking brat he’s clocked at Sherlock’s flat. He’s still wearing an expensive suit, but it doesn’t fit too well around the shoulders anymore.
He sneers, bending his body forward and trying to glare into John’s eyes. The effect is somewhat mitigated by the fact that he’s sporting a bruise from John’s knuckles. John tips his head to the side, regards him coolly while Sebastian spits out his next words.

“So it’s you, hmm? You’re the one who convinced that slut to get clean, then? You fucker. Messed up my entire gig. Unless you’re his new dealer?’

His hackles rise and before he knows it and he’s curling his palm around Wilke’s neck, thumb pressing into his Adam’s apple, pushing him against the gritty wall opposite. A few people passing by give them looks but no one stops to intervene.

“Start using whole sentences, you prat.” John snarls, a growl building in his throat. He presses into the vulnerable skin, something inside of him preens at the reddish tinge rising to Wilke’s skin. He struggles, but John pins a knee to his leg and keeps him there. He’s clearly been using, which is why he’s weaker. It’s not much of a struggle. He’s coming down from a high and presumably won’t shy away from getting violent but John is always up for a brawl. Especially with a cretin like this.

Wilkes smiles, a lopsided, vile thing, squirming beneath his touch and struggling to speak. “What did you tell Holmes, hmm? That you’ll bond with him if he sobers up? Does he know you’re just looking to get a fuck out of it? Because he’s not coming to me anymore, and Mark said he’s not selling, so what the fuck, mate? Are you keeping him all to yourself?”

“You sick fuck,” John seethes, and lets go of him, because he’s turning an unsettling shade of purple. Wilkes coughs, bends over and rubs his chest. John stands there, looking at him, hoping the disgust shows on his face. “How did you even find me?”

“I told you, Watson. That’s your name isn’t it?” his voice is rough and raspy. Good. He stands up, leans against a nearby rubbish bin for support. “I’ve got connections. Listen. If you want a bit of advice. It’s not going to last. This thing you’ve got going with him. He’s fit and everything - I’ll grant you that, but he’ll be a better fuck if you’re offering him something, if you catch my drift. That’s how I got him on his knees, and if you’re clever, you’ll forget the dinner dates and just shove it in and throw him some coke afterwards, yeah? Then we can all share him, how about that?”

John decides not to answer that, and instead grabs him by the collar and knees him in the gut. He makes an awful screechy sound, bends over double, but John keeps him steady with a hand on his shoulder. He bends down and whispers in his ear, “If you ever speak to me again, I will fucking break your fingers, do you hear me? And if you ever, ever, try to touch Sherlock again I will personally inform his big brother that’s not going to be good for you, trust me. I mean, I could - “ his fingers tighten around Wilke’s shoulder and he lands another swift punch, a clean solar plexus shot.
John wouldn’t usually have been this violent, but Wilke’s words had crawled into his skin and the idea of this bastard speaking about Sherlock like that, speaking about his omega, insulting him, demeaning him, talking about him as if he was a piece of meat, it makes something very unfamiliar and primitive claw at his sides, and whatever it was demanded retribution, physical evidence of how far he’d go to protect Sherlock.

-“keep doing this, but this has happened twice and you’re just not learning. And besides, the way you’re currently burning through whatever’s left of your supply, I’ll be surprised if you’re not dead in a ditch by the end of this week.”

He finally lets go of him, steps away, breathing hard. Wilkes stumbles, coughing pathetically. He feels distinctly warm, as if it would be a good idea to take off his clothes. His fingers twitch with the need to continue, grab Wilkes and just- it seems like something he’s supposed to do, how could he just let him go? What if he were to find Sherlock again, try to hurt him - touch him? John couldn’t allow that. Sherlock is his omega and it is his responsibility to protect him, to keep him safe - and he’ll just have to get rid of Wilkes, that’s the only way -

John shudders a breath. Shit. No, he can’t do that. What the fuck. He steps back, his mouth dry from panting, and picks up his phone where it’s lying a few inches away. Wilkes is still groaning, now kneeling on the ground, and John needs to get out of here before the seductive whisper in his head gets the better of him and he lays hands on that arse again - he isn’t worth it. Sherlock wouldn’t like it.

It takes him a few moments of frenzied walking before he slows down, and he realises that his knuckles are split, and that his fingers hurt quite badly. He tries to flex them, and it’s difficult. He wipes them on his jeans, and now he has a suspicious rust-coloured patch on his knee. What was the point? It would take Sherlock three seconds to look at him and make a deduction.

The growl that has been building in his throat the entire time escapes in a rough exhale, and John raises a shaking hand to his hair, pushes back the damp strands. He can’t meet Sherlock like this, he still feels a tad volatile. His chest still burns, his fingers flexing and unflexing of their own accord as though it will lend him some modicum of self-control.

He leans against the glass display wall of a shop, takes deep breaths, tries to clamp down on the violent feelings still churning in his gut. John doesn’t understand, he had always been protective of Sherlock, but it had never manifested in quite this way before, as though it would take barely more than someone giving an errant glance Sherlock’s way, and John would be ready to rip out their throat with his teeth.

Bonded mates displayed some level of possessive rage, fuelled by hormones and the chemical released during the pair-bonding process, but Sherlock and John weren’t bonded, far from it.
The side of his neck twinges oddly, and John tries to rub away the phantom pain with his fingers.

***

Sherlock is sitting exactly where John expects him to, cross-legged near the lake, scrolling through his mobile. John wants to take a moment to appreciate him, the pale curve of his neck, the way his dark hair curls around his ear, and most importantly, the few seconds that Sherlock doesn’t realise that John is watching him.

But Sherlock is Sherlock and he immediately senses John’s presence, and he looks up, a bright smile lighting up his face. It reaches his eyes, and God, the lengths John would go to only to keep him safe. Suddenly the thought of people like Sebastian touching him, taking advantage of him, those awful insinuations that he’d made, crowd into his head and John can’t breathe. Sherlock must see his expression change because the smile flickers, and his brow furrows.

“Jo-“ he begins to say the first syllable of his name, but John is already next to him, pulling him up by the bicep, and without thinking, he presses his nose to the base of his throat.

“Fuck, I forgot you were on suppressants,” John says, and he can’t recognise his own voice, it’s barely more than a growl, and it sounds vaguely threatening. He can feel Sherlock grow still against him, he inhales sharply and his fingers find the hem of John’s sleeve and grip, as if he’s trying to anchor himself to John.

“What are you-“

All John can smell is the harsh, clinical scent of suppressants, and it’s awful, and wrong, he needs to smell Sherlock’s natural fragrance - the delicate rosewater fragrance of him, the burn of cinnamon. But there is only Sherlock, his shampoo, lingering traces of soap, the lightest tang of sweat. Desperately, John pulls him closer and mouths at his pulse.

It would make this better, would calm the roaring monster in his stomach. “Can I scent you?” he murmurs against his neck. “Let me scent you. Please.”

Sherlock is panting above him, caught off-guard by John’s behaviour, and at any other time, John would try to calm him, run a soothing hand down his side but right now all John wants is to smear his scent all over him, and a tiny part of him is a bit pleased at Sherlock’s willing submission.

“Yes, alright,” he says, in a strangled voice.
“Fuck,” John hisses, curves a hand around his nape, pulls him down so he can continue nosing at his throat. He presses open mouth kisses to the side of his neck, rubs his cheek against him, and he’s never really done this before, not quite so intensely, never with the very important goal of covering Sherlock with his scent, dousing him in in pheromones so that anyone who catches a whiff knows that Sherlock is out of fucking bounds and-

“John, that’s- that’s enough-“ Sherlock says between breaths, trying to push John away gently.

Panic. John presses in deeper, grabs a hold of a bony hip and pulls Sherlock’s body towards his. His lips open around the ridge of a collarbone and he sucks, wants to just-

“John, stop.”

Sherlock slides his palm up his bicep and fits it around his shoulder, firmly pushing him back, and John lets him. His eyes, pale and concerned, flick over him in one fluid movement, still keeping him firmly at arm’s length. John stares back at him, trying to quell the need to grab hold of him again and stamp his claim. God, what is wrong with him?! He thinks Sherlock will step away from him, try to put distance between their bodies, but instead, once he’s satisfied with his visual check, he leans in and presses a kiss to the corner of John’s mouth. Immediately the touch of his lips makes John want to get closer, but Sherlock seems to sense this and he curls his fingers around John’s wrists, keeps them pinned to his sides.

“Shhh. I’m fine. I’m alright,” he says, voice brought down to a soothing whisper, and Sherlock never sounds like that, but it does help. He rubs his nose along John’s jaw, kisses a spot under his ear and then John can hear him press his nose there and breathe in deeply.

They’ve never scented each other before, never quite so thoroughly, at least, and why not? John could do this for hours.

Finally, he pulls away, and his cheeks are tinged with pink, his pupils dilated, and he smells just like John. It is intensely… satisfying. It pleases him, in a dark, hungry sort of way. Sherlock should always look like that. Like something that belongs to him. Immediately he grimaces inwardly at the thought. Christ, his Alpha instincts had just got more and more intense since he’d met Sherlock. He doesn’t want to think of the implications of this, so he pushes it away.

John cups his hand around his cheek, thumb sweeping over the bump of a cheekbone before his fingers slide into his thick hair. Sherlock’s eyes flutter closed and he leans into John’s touch. He turns
his head and presses a quick kiss to the inside of his wrist, and it’s an unbearably sweet, intimate gesture. John’s heart squeezes in his chest.

Sherlock looks down at him and cocks a questioning eyebrow. “Your knuckles are bleeding and you smell like Sebastian. Are you going to tell me what happened or should I?” Before John can reply Sherlock reaches for his hand, holds it by the underside of his wrist in his palm and glances at the bruises. John watches his nostrils flare and a flash of something almost violent appear in his eyes.

“You hit him. Twice.” His voice is hushed. Softly, he swipes a thumb over the skin. It twinges a bit.

“How can you smell that wanker anyway?” John finally asks. It comes out a bit rougher than he had intended. Sherlock’s gaze flicks up and his mouth pulls up in a wry smile.

“Sebastian is the worst kind of alpha, posturing all the time. His scent is always as intense as possible, because he uses it to intimidate everyone around him. He attempts it constantly with me. In fact, it’s the same thing you’re doing right now, but I don’t think you even realise it.”

His gaze softens and when Sherlock looks at him like that, it’s always heady. Fondness, warm and lovely, settles in his gut and he can’t help but reach for him, curl his fingers into his shirt and pull him closer, kiss him. Hunggrily, deeply. Sherlock makes a low sound of approval, cups the back of John’s head and opens his mouth against his, lets John lick into him and nip his bottom lip. John can smell him, just the barest hint of his natural scent, his glands releasing them in response to John’s touch, his mouth, his pheromones, covering as much of his skin as John can reach.

“He was being an arsehole, I gave him what he deserved,” John growls. “Does that wanker still bother you at uni?”

Sherlock pulls back, licks his lips before pursing them thoughtfully. John leans forward to catch those lips again but Sherlock stops him, just the barest hint of his fingers at his chest.

“I see,” he says quietly, as if he’s just understood something. “Did he complain about not being able to fuck me for drugs anymore? Not that he ever did. But I suppose that he’s angry at the loss of an opportunity.”

Sherlock steps away from him, turns his head and stares at the lake. Water laps at the banks, the lightest breeze swipes its fingers into Sherlock’s dark curls, pushes them back. John doesn’t know what to do, beyond finding Sebastian again and beating him to a pulp.
“Sherlock -“

“Did it...” He makes an odd gesture with his hand, waves it about aimlessly. He isn’t even looking at him, choosing to stare down at his feet. “Did it bother you... When he said - those things?”

John shakes his head, mouth dry. “You know, for a clever man, you can be a real idiot sometimes.”

Head still ducked, Sherlock releases a brief huff of breath which is clearly a chuckle he’s trying to hide. John rolls his eyes, covers the distance between them and wraps an arm around his waist, pulls him to his side. Sherlock is stiff at first but then relents, the hard angles of his body softening. He lets John rub his nose against his neck again, sighs softly when he flicks a tongue against his pulse, just a bit. Makes the scent stronger.

“I bought us food,” Sherlock murmurs, changing the subject. “Are you hungry?”

“You really brought food?” John looks up at him, grinning.

Sherlock shoots him a half-amused, half-irritated look. “I expected you to be hungry. What kind of omega would I be, if I can’t even provide sustenance to my Alpha?”

He pulls away from John, gestures to the plastic bag on the ground, right next to where he was sitting. Then he looks back at John, eyebrows raised, a bit of the mischievous glint back in his eyes. John knows he’s just joking, but it still makes him feel a momentary pang of longing. He wishes it were just as easy, to call Sherlock his omega, to make his claiming of him public. But he can’t. So he settles for smiling up at Sherlock, smacking a kiss on his cheek and pulling him down with him so that they can both sit cross-legged on the grass.

“Are your fingers sprained?” he asks, once they’re on the ground and Sherlock has passed a white plastic container to him. John tears off the packaging with a bit more violence than necessary. Sherlock notices and raises an eyebrow at him, but chooses not to comment.

“No, they’re fine. Just a bit bruised.”

Sherlock hums thoughtfully, John turns his head and looks at him, plastic fork still suspended
midway towards his mouth.

“What?”

“You hurt him quite badly,” Sherlock announces. “The bruises on your knuckles are enough to prove that. Threatened him as well, it’s a natural inclination of yours. You would have gone further, I think. Instinct.” He pokes at the takeaway box, spears some broccoli on his fork and puts it in his mouth. John watches him steadily, deciding against confirming his deductions.

“You thought I’d be angry, that you’d decided to have a go at him,” silver eyes sparkle under his shock of hair, his mouth twisted into something between a smirk and a grin. Oh. He’s teasing. “Maybe. A bit. But I don’t think you could have fought off that Alpha part inside of you for long.”

“It wasn’t all instinct,” John protests, allows Sherlock to crawl closer to him, hook on elegant finger into the vee of his shirt, pull him closer so that he can lean forward and press his mouth to John’s. He tastes like soy sauce and cigarette smoke. Not as terrible a combination as one would think. John has to put his food down because Sherlock suddenly seems very determined, because he’s throwing one coltish leg over John’s hip, cupping his hand around his neck and angling his head up to kiss him more deeply.

“I thought you wanted to eat,” he mutters against his mouth, setting his hands on his hips to steady him.

“I did, but you smell very… enticing,” his hips roll in a very suggestive way, and his fingers move towards the back of his head, twine into his hair, pull his head back so he can latch a mouth on a spot under his ear. John groans, familiar heat travelling down his body, his fingers deepening their grip on Sherlock’s waist. God, every time Sherlock touches him John wants nothing more than to grab him, push him down, catch those plush lips, suck and bite-

“We’re in a very public place,” his hands slip down, cup Sherlock’s arse, squeeze, and encourage Sherlock’s effort to rub off against him until orgasm. He continues to move up and down, little shivered thrusts, sucking a bruise on to his throat.

“I checked. No one’s watching us. Haven’t you realised how clever I am, John?”

John peeks over Sherlock’s shoulder and squints, tries to see if there’s anyone who thought to have a
“John,” Sherlock calls his name, voice low, cups the side of his face and turns John forcefully so he can look at him. His eyes are bright and it’s thoroughly unfair, that Sherlock can just give him barely a glance and make John forget everything outside of him. “Stop paying attention to anything that isn’t me,” he orders him, and John grins, tightens his hands at Sherlock’s waist and twists, lets them both go sprawling on the grass until he rolls over and on top of Sherlock, catches the curve of his smile in his mouth, kisses him until he stops giggling and starts gasping for breath instead.

“Does this please his Highness?” John teases, kissing down the pale length of his throat. He finds the bruise he’d sucked on to his skin two days before, still bright and conspicuous. He licks it, takes great pleasure in the noise Sherlock makes and the way his hips push up against John, and then grind down restlessly on the grass. A bond mark would sit right there, just above his carotid artery, on the taunt skin of his neck.

Sherlock would look absolutely lovely, and if he decided to hide it with a scarf, that would be fine too. John could slip it off and it would be for his eyes only, like a salacious little secret. Anyone who gave Sherlock a casual glance wouldn’t know, but John would. Not that John would take too kindly to anyone eyeing Sherlock up, but still.

Sherlock shivers against him, goose pimples break out under John’s hands where they’re positioned against the skin above his waistline. John runs a hand from knee to thigh, cups a hand under the muscle and pushes it up and against his hip, encourages Sherlock to wrap a leg around him. He does so obediently, and it’s always a little satisfying, when he goes pliant and submissive like this, it barely takes a minute.

And maybe it’s that, the way Sherlock offers himself up so easily. Whatever John had managed to push down after his meeting with Sebastian rears his head again and everything inside of him tips, tumbles over into something far from gentle. He presses in deeper, a growl sounds, low and threatening in his throat and he can barely make out the way Sherlock shifts underneath him, his voice calling John’s name uncertainly.

It feels like his ears are full of cotton wool. He grabs Sherlock’s wrists, pulls them up and over his head, bends down and opens his mouth around his neck, presses in deep with his incisors, and Sherlock makes a soft, whimpering noise, and that’s lovely, Sherlock is his, he’s his-

“Fuck,” John’s eyes widen as he looks down at Sherlock’s, his eyes dark and cheeks coloured, and there’s something that looks an awful lot like confusion in his gaze, and what is wrong with John, how could he do that, how-
He rolls off Sherlock, exhales roughly, tries to focus on the blue of the sky above him and feels vaguely ill. His arms lie to his side, sweat cools on his forehead, the back of his neck.

“John?” Sherlock calls, uncertainly. He can feel him cup a palm around his shoulder. “John, what—“

Guilt settles like a stone in his stomach, and he sits up, runs a hand through his hair before looking at Sherlock. “I’m sorry,” he says quickly. “I don’t know what I was—“

“Sorry?” Sherlock snaps. “What on earth for?”

John gapes. “You know, I—“

“Yes, you were kissing me and you got a bit rough. So what? I liked it. I wanted it. If I didn’t want it I would have told you. What’s brought this on?”

How does John explain this? It’s not as if he didn’t want to. But he doesn’t want it to be fuelled by instinct, doesn’t want to touch Sherlock because some ridiculous Alpha voice is telling him he needs to. He’s not like them, Sebastian, or Trevor, for God’s sake -

Sherlock shifts subtly backwards, as though putting distance between himself and John, and his expression becomes carefully blank. “This is about Victor.”

John shakes his head, reaches out a hand but Sherlock bears his teeth. “I see. So because you think I was assaulted in my youth and sucked people off for coke you can only touch me in a certain way?”

“No. No. That’s not—“

“That’s exactly what this is,” Sherlock snarls at him, standing up, and John follows suit, tries to reach for him but he shifts out of his way. “I wouldn’t have told you if I had known you’d react in such a pedestrian, boring, ordinary way.”

“Sherlock -“
He doesn’t have time to finish his sentence because Sherlock glares at him for a second longer before turning around, walking away in the opposite direction.

“Don’t follow me,” he calls out over his shoulder. John can’t decide between respecting his wishes or simply grabbing him back but he settles with watching him go.

The wind picks up a few littered leaves on the grass and they swirl around, before being pulled down inevitably by the gravity of the earth.

***

When he steps inside the flat after the remainder of his classes, it’s mostly dark. Lit only by the dim glow of the fireplace and a lamp. Mrs Hudson had been up here to light the fire then, which was honestly quite lovely of her. He can’t imagine cleaning up after Sherlock ever being easy.

He knows Sherlock is here, can smell the lingering notes of him in the air. He decides against calling his name, because if Sherlock is in a sulk of epic proportions nothing short of John actually being murdered will bring him out of his bedroom. So he sits on the sofa, throws his bag on the floor and leans his head against the leather, closing his eyes. The only thing he can see in his head is the flash of hurt in Sherlock’s gaze, his furrowed brows and the look of offended disbelief colouring his delicate features.

Is it wrong for John to feel guilty? To have questions? Not to know exactly where the line is, if there is any line at all? If John just went ahead every single time and simply took what he wanted, how would that make him any different than every other shit excuse for a human being that had touched Sherlock over the years? And for God’s sake, did he expect John to read his mind like he does constantly, read his body, know exactly what he wants, how he wants it, without Sherlock fucking telling him anything, before storming off-

“You’re home.”

John looks up, startled, to find Sherlock leaning against the wall that divides the kitchen from the hallway. He’s wearing that ridiculous dressing gown that plagues all of John’s dreams, it is loosely tied around his slender waist, falling off a bit from his shoulder, exposing the porcelain curve of his collarbone.
“Sherlock,” John says, helplessly, anger dissipating.

He thinks Sherlock will spit at him like an angry cat as he so often does when he’s pissed off (or when he’s coming down from a high), but instead he’s graced with a slight smile. John swallows, watches as Sherlock crosses the room and makes his way over to him, and before he can say anything else, he sinks gracefully to his knees in front of John, fitting perfectly between his feet and the coffee table.

“What-“

“Shh,” Sherlock shushes him, and slowly, leans his head against John’s thigh. The weight is warm and comforting, and because it’s the most natural thing to do, John reaches out and cups a hand over his head, presses down against springy curls. Sherlock’s body looks frail and birdlike, and the familiar surge of protective fondness rises up in his chest. John licks his lips, strokes his hair, and Sherlock nuzzles against his thigh.

It’s entirely unexpected. It’s very un-Sherlock, and yet, John doesn’t have the strength to ask why, or to think too much about it.

“I’m sorry,” Sherlock finally murmurs. He tilts his head up, looks at him from beneath his dark lashes. “You know how I feel about it, you knowing. You were being ridiculous, and it made me feel awful, that you’d thought you’d done something wrong, just because you touched me.”

“You don’t have anything to be sorry about,” John smiles down at him and let his fingertips slide down his temple, trace the sharp edge of his jaw. “What’s all this about? I thought you were angry with me.”

“I am angry at you. Or I was. But I had some time to think. I thought you would be angry with me.” He leans against John’s palm, and then bends down to lay his forehead against his thigh again, nuzzles a bit until his nose is pressed against the inside of John’s knee. He swallows past a hard lump as he rubs his nose there, and then moves slowly upward, until his face is practically nestled against the crease of his groin.

“Sherlock, ah - don’t-” John’s hips shift marginally at the proximity, his hand, which had so far been quite gently petting at Sherlock’s head, tightens a bit in the curls.

“Be quiet,” Sherlock commands him, and tilts his face, breathes hot and humid against his crotch.
John stirs in his pants, feels the very urgent need to push Sherlock harder against him, but controls himself. Sherlock buries his face there, John can see the rise and fall of his back as he breathes him in, and then, finally, blessedly, lifts his head so he can look up at John.

“You’re being a very bad man,” John tells him, and Sherlock’s mouth pulls up in a crooked smirk. His hands run up from John’s ankles to cup the side of his thighs, he rests his temple against John and fixes his gaze on him, pale and unfathomable and impossible.

“There are things I want,” Sherlock finally says, his voice low and intense. “And I… am not always comfortable wanting them. Does that make sense?”

“Er… sure. Yes. I think so.”

Sherlock nods slowly, and cups his hand over John’s, where it’s nestled in his hair, and slots their fingers together. “I want… this. This,’ he repeated more firmly. ‘And for a long time, I believed that I could only have this at the expense of losing something. John, I… I’ve struggled. With these things. I don’t know how to put it into words, but I want you. I want you… so badly, and sometimes, I can’t tell you how badly I want you and because you’re you, you’re always so careful and I hate it, because what if I was someone else? What if I hadn’t told you anything? Would you be different? Would you stop caring about being gentle and take me, just fucking take me, without me having to ask for it?”

Oh. Oh. John shakes his head slowly, tugs their entwined hands towards himself and places a kiss on the top of Sherlock’s hand. Of all the stupid, ridiculous things…

“You think I see you differently because I know your past?”

Sherlock’s eyes shine as they look up at him, and John doesn’t want this, doesn’t want Sherlock kneeling in front of him like that, not when they’re talking about something so serious and important, but he doesn’t want to break the spell, or do anything to make Sherlock stop talking.

“I-“ he blinks a few times. “I know you don’t. You told me. You told me, and I believe you. It’s just…” he sits up, rests on his knees so he’s a little higher up. “I trust you. Do you know how difficult it has been for me to trust anyone? After… after Victor, it was always a means to an end. Sex, I mean. But with you, it’s…” he reaches for John, pulls him down by the back of his neck and presses his lips to John’s. Hard, bruising, a tiny bit desperate. He pulls away too soon and rests his forehead against John’s. “It’s different. And I don’t want careful. I don’t want gentle. I want you. To let go.”
John’s chest hurts at his words, because of course John knows, because Sherlock’s vulnerability is a gift. He’s seen him go from hard angles to pliant warmth, and John has been allowed to see that, and of course he knows how difficult it has been for him. Sherlock’s sharpness, his volatile mouth, the way he rests all his weight against John when they’re watching telly. Sherlock, who was always so desperate to hide his softness, who readily lets himself be looked at if it’s John on the other end.

He doesn’t know what he wants to do more, fold him against his chest or let go as he’s been asked to.

“Sherlock, God…” he lets go of Sherlock’s hand, instead cups his hands around his ears, swipes them into his hair. Fuck. How many times had he thought about this, God, fantasised, having Sherlock like that, no holds barred. He wants to, he wants to so much, wants to know how Sherlock would respond, if John were to do he really wants. If he were to, god, tie him up, bite - bend him over -

“You,” he grits out, between clenched teeth. “You need to learn to communicate with me first, you giant clot.”

Sherlock’s eyes are wide and dark as they regard him, his cheeks coloured with pink, his throat, his chest, all flushed, pale and untouched. “What exactly would you like me to tell you?”

“The only reason I - I stop myself, Sherlock, is because I don’t want to do anything that might accidentally trigger you, I don’t know. You know what I mean? This isn’t about sex, never has been. You’re fucking special to me, do you know that? That’s why. That’s the only reason. So look at me. And listen very carefully, yeah? You tell me, right now, everything that’s on the table.”

Sherlock’s mouth parts, he licks his bottom lip and John has to clench his jaw in the effort not to lean forward and catch it in his mouth, kiss him until he can’t breathe. “Right now?”

John smiles at him, flicks his eyes downward and takes in his state of dress - or rather undress, because that dressing gown would fall off of him with one flick of his finger.

“Right now,” he concedes.

Sherlock’s blush deepens at his words, his face still cradled in John’s hands. His fingers tighten where they’re curled around John’s knees and very slowly, he leans forward, tilts his head upwards and kisses John.

“Just touch me,” he whispers against his mouth.

“I’ve touched you plenty,” John reminds him, possessive contentment unfurling and pooling in his gut as he slides his hand down the side of Sherlock’s neck, down his chest and towards the loosely tied sash. “Tell me what you want.” The last time John had given in to his instincts was ages ago when he’d fingered Sherlock over the dining table. The memory makes him flush, makes his cock harden further under his jeans; Sherlock, bent over, hands scrabbling for purchase on the wood, begging.

He’d like to see Sherlock like that again.

He gives the sash a slow tug, watches as it falls apart and the dressing gown parts. Sherlock’s mouth falls open where it’s still pressed against John’s mouth, his hands slide across his thighs and grip the hem of his jumper. John feathers a touch over his cock, which is already hard and leaking, and there’s just the slightest tang of slick in the room, which means Sherlock is wet, and God, that makes
his mouth water.

“Want you, just you,” Sherlock mumbles, hips jerking into John’s loosely held fist. “I believe that a certain kind of… touch, would overlay previous memories with one that are more - ah, pleasant.”

John smirks, catches his plush bottom lip with his teeth and tugs. “And how badly do you want it, love?”

Sherlock shivers at his tone, and even John doesn’t know when and how that dark edge crepted into it, and it’s exactly what it felt like a few hours ago, only this time he’s allowed. John keeps moving his hand over Sherlock’s cock, watches as his eyes flutter and his lips part, the blush steal high into his cheeks.

“Very,” he whispers.

“Good. Now, stand up and take that thing off, for Christ’s sake, it’s not covering anything at all.” He takes his hand away and Sherlock’s eyes open all the way, look at him, glassy and unfocussed, before he stumbles to his feet and gives his shoulders a little shake so that the gown slips off his body, landing on the floor in a hush of silk.

John licks his lips, lets his eyes travel from where they meet his dark gaze to downwards, the bony curve of his shoulders, sternum, the two peaked dusky nipples, the planes of his flat stomach, his abdomen quivering with anticipation and his pretty little cock, leaking and reaching urgently for John. He grabs hold of Sherlock’s wrist, pulls him down so he has a lapful of naked, wet Sherlock, who immediately settles securely over his hips and kisses him, hands curling over his shoulders.

“This clothing disparity,” he mentions, sounding out of breath. “I like it.”

“Yeah?” John’s fingers find their way into Sherlock’s hair, he pulls him back so he can look into his eyes. “What else do you like? You’re supposed to tell me.”

“The hair pulling,” he obediently answers. “You’ve done it before, when I suck you off. Do it. Do it again. Right now.”

John tightens his grip and pulls like he’s asked to, and he’s rewarded with Sherlock’s sharp intake of breath, and the twitch of his cock against his crotch.

“Oh, that’s… that’s good, John.”

“Hmm. Looks like it.”

He hooks an arm around his waist and pushes him to the side, so he’s on his back against the arm of the sofa and John can hover on top of him. Sherlock pants softly, looks up at him with eyes that are so trusting and soft that John can’t resist pressing a soft kiss to his temple. Sherlock whines, fists his hands into the front of his jumper and pushes up insistently against his crotch.

“Sorry, I just -“ John sucks an earlobe into his mouth and Sherlock wraps a leg around his waist, tries to push him up and against his cock.

“Do you think it’s odd, that, I - uh, want it… This way?”

“There are lots of odd things about you but no, this is not one of them,” John kisses down his throat, presses his teeth in, hard, against the taunt skin of his neck. Not hard enough to break skin, but close. Sherlock whimpers, and it’s a lovely sound, it’s a begging sound, and John wants nothing more than to make it louder, make Sherlock go boneless and limp, to be so washed out after John is done with
him that he’d be ruined for everyone else.

“And you - you want it. Like this. You like it.”

John hums, slides his palm from hip to abdomen and over peaked nipples, to rest gently against his throat. Sherlock immediately arches, his mouth falls open in a wordless moan and in a stroke of inspiration John curls his hand around his throat, squeezes gently. Sherlock’s hips stutter against him, his heel digs in where they’re pressed against the small of his back and he tries to push John harder against him.

“That. That, do that - please.”

He keeps his hand there, curled lightly around his pale throat and continues to suck bruises onto the side of his neck. “What if I marked you up a bit, hmm? More so than usual. Make it evident for everyone that someone has you. Would you let me?”

“Yes,” Sherlock twists his head to the side to allow more access and John smiles, his cock presses insistently against his jeans and wouldn’t it be lovely to just unzip himself and rut against Sherlock’s thigh, come all over his -

“I like it when you - when you’re gentle, with me. When you suck me off, and - ah,” his voice hitches when John shifts him up a bit with a hand under his back and then wraps it around his cock. “When you hold me. But I - I like this. Too. Do you? Would you -“

“You’re making very little sense, love,” John says against his mouth.

Sherlock groans frustratedly and his hips fuck into John’s fist in sharp thrusts, leaking all over his hand and making a mess of the sofa, he smells absolutely divine, even if it’s not as strong as it would have been if he’d not been on suppressants, but still.

“You could hurt me. A bit. Just a bit. I think I’d like that. Would you do that? I’ve wondered about it,” he wraps his arms around John’s neck and presses his mouth to his, clumsy with arousal, and John wants to do everything with him, pepper his face with kisses and curl up behind him and fuck him till he’s wordless. He moves away from Sherlock’s cock and his hands move down, over the delicate skin of his inner thighs and lower, lower, until his fingers press against his hole, and he’s wet. Wet and messy and he doesn’t wait, he presses in with two fingers and Sherlock keens, his back arching and his head thrown back, throat barred like an offering.

“Yes,” he answers. “Just a bit. See how you like it. What do you want, hmm? Tell me.” He twists and Sherlock’s arm flails about, grips into the soft leather of the sofa so hard his knuckles turn white, the other stays wrapped around his shoulders, fingers twisted in John’s hair.

“John, I, I, don’t know, I don’t know,” he gushes over his fingers, words melt into meaningless noise. John pumps his fingers in and out, the angle is awkward and he’s starting to cramp, but Sherlock is flushed pink, begging, he looks like a fucking treasure, how could he stop, how could he ever stop? “Just - I want you. Want you to - oh God-“

“What else is on the table, hmm? Go on,” he pulls his fingers out and Sherlock drips a bit more onto the sofa, his abdomen fluttering. He looks absolutely wrecked, still manages to cast a baleful eye at John.

“You stopped,” he complains.

“Hmm,” John smiles down at him and in a quick movement grabs him by the hips and flips him over. Sherlock gasps, tries to push back against John but then John grabs him by the curls at the base
of his neck, pushes him down and over the arm of the sofa. Sherlock sighs, almost in relief, places one cheek against the leather and curves his spine, tries to fit himself against John’s cock.

John groans, palms himself, and there’s nothing separating them except the barrier of his jeans. Fuck, Sherlock is already naked, wet and naked, his eyes half-lidded and his body tight and tremulous, John would just have to unzip, and, God, just push in.

He bends over, plasters himself to Sherlock’s back, presses his mouth to the side of his neck and shifts his hips forward, just a little, so his erection is pressed right between his cheeks. His hips tremble with the effort of not just, just.

“And this?” he asks, voice shaking. “What about this?” He rolls his hips, Sherlock pants, he throws his head back and reaches a hand backwards, pats at John’s hip as if inviting him to come closer, press in deeper.

“Yes,” he says, and his voice is low and raspy, undone. “Yes, John, yes.”

John smiles, desire unfurls in the pit of his stomach, and he sinks his teeth into Sherlock’s shoulder, hard enough to leave a visible bite-mark there. Sherlock makes a high, needy sound, already sounding completely gone even though John hasn’t even had him yet. If he can reduce him to a babbling mess with barely a few touches, what would Sherlock be like in the full throes of a heat?

He’s just about to ask him, see if he can make him flush and splutter, when the doorbell rings. High and horrible, John groans in frustration.

“Oh, ignore it,” Sherlock orders him breathlessly. “Penetrative sex. Is on the table. We should. We should.”

Sherlock’s head dips, and the curve of his neck is right there, open and vulnerable, and does he know what this position is doing to John’s head? What it’s costing him to not just - not give a fuck about propriety and take him right here? John heaves a breath between his teeth, runs a palm down his side, over the bumps of his ribs. His skin is damp, his body trembling -

“But here,” John decides, because Christ, if Sherlock is letting him, he’s not going to have their first time be on this sofa. “On a bed. Bedroom. Come on -”

The bell rings again and Sherlock makes a truly demented noise. He shifts his head towards the vague direction of the door and shouts, “Go away! Whoever you are, go away!”
“Sherlock,” a small voice on the other side calls his name. “Sherlock, it’s me.”

“Erm,” John shifts back on his heels, stares as Sherlock narrows his eyes and his body goes from pliant and languorous to alert and rigid.

“Shit,” he mutters between his breath and he’s twisting underneath him, rolling out from beneath John and John can only get a few seconds of mouth-watering, gloriously nude Sherlock before he’s bending over (ah, fuck) and picking up his dressing gown from the floor, throwing it over his shoulders and securing it tightly around himself.

The bell rings again, this time in a series of three sharp notes. Sherlock scowls at the door, and then turns to look at John, who is still kneeling on the sofa. His hair is an utter mess, the side of his neck littered with bruises. His eyes, however, are bright and focussed, and John realises with a sinking heart that they’re clearly going to be putting this on hold for a while. How does Sherlock turn it on and off like that? John’s head is still spinning.

“John, you must get rid of your erection quickly,” Sherlock orders him, gesturing towards his crotch with a long-fingered hand. What? “Then you have to open the door and let whoever is there inside.”

“Uh,” John blinks at him, feeling a little stupid. “And you -“

“I’m going to take a quick shower and put on some proper clothes. I reek of your pheromones. And I’m covered in slick.” He tosses his head, tries to press his curls back into place, but is unsuccessful. Before John can clarify anything further, he turns around and walks right out of the living room and inside the bathroom down the hall. Covered with slick, yes, God, John had done that, and now there’s just stopping.

“Fucking hell,” John mutters angrily to himself, and ignoring the continuous stream of rings, moves towards the door to open it. His erection had already wilted halfway since they’d stopped, and at this point he is so bloody annoyed at whoever it is that he doesn’t care if they get a damn eyeful. And who was so important to Sherlock anyway, the bloke didn’t have any friends - or did he? Shit. Did Sherlock have friends that he never told him about?

With a great deal of sudden trepidation John unlocks the door and opens it.

There are two of them, boy and girl. Both of them have matching caramel-coloured skin, short black hair. The girl is dressed in a ratty pair of jeans and a sweatshirt, the boy far better dressed, white shirt
tucked into trousers and an accompanying longish coat, a bit like Sherlock’s.

“Hi,” the girl begins, nervously. John’s gaze skitters over to hers. She tucks a strand of hair behind an ear and smiles shyly. “I’m Ray. Is Sherlock home? I figured he’d want to be left alone, he hasn’t spoken to me at uni much. But I - we, well, my cousin -“ she tips her head towards the boy next to her, who gives John a slow smile, eyes sparkling. “Needs his help. I mean. I told him, that Sherlock could help. Maybe. I don’t know. He’s clever, and I heard he helps out at the Yard sometimes -“

“Alright, slow down,” John gives her what he hopes is a soothing smile and opens the door wider so that they can come in. One of them - probably the boy, smells very, very strong. He does nothing to cover his scent, and John’s head spins at the intensity of it. Clearly an omega.

The girl (Ray, right?) stands a little awkwardly once John’s closed the door, hands wrapped around herself and shifting from one foot to the next. The male omega, however, looks very… at ease. He takes a swift look around the living room, eyes lingering on the skull on the mantel piece and the bison with headphones, a little smirk playing on the corner of his mouth. John feels a little irritated. He shrugs out of his coat, turns to John and holds it out to him.

“Aren’t you going to take my coat, then, love?” he asks, and cocks his head to the side. His lashes are long and he bats them a bit, and there’s a thin strip of leather around his slender throat. John swallows. Omegas would wear chokers in the 1950s to send out the message that they were fertile and ready to spend a heat with a willing Alpha, and he doesn’t think he’s seen it beyond pictures. It’s alarmingly sexist (and he’s been told by a fair number of omegas, so he’ll believe it) and a tad bit demeaning, but clearly, judging by the unmistakable, tiny O-ring attached to the middle, he knows exactly what he’s doing.

“Uh, okay,” John takes the coat from him and hangs it on the peg behind the door. When he turns around Ray has seated herself on one of the armchairs, looking ill-at-ease, and the bloke is still looking at him.

“Where - where is he? I heard him shouting.” Ray twists her fingers where they’re clasped on her knee.

“He’ll be here in a minute,” John explains to the two of them. “And, um, what is this about?”

“We’ll get to it when Holmes chooses to grace us with his presence,” the boy says, stepping into John’s line of vision and holding out a hand. John just notices that his eyes are rimmed with kohl. “My cousin didn’t introduce me. Reggie. Reginald Musgrave, to be precise, but it makes me sound like a dull old man. And you are?”
“Uh, John. John Watson.” John takes his proffered hand and shakes it. His accent is very posh, probably some rich brat, and his clothes only provide more evidence of it.

“John,” he repeats, and smiles again. John feels vaguely uncomfortable, and he doesn’t know why. “Are you his… mate?”

“Reggie, for God’s sake!” Ray seethes, and Reggie turns around to shoot her a smirk.

“I’m just asking. You couldn’t tell me if Holmes was bonded or not.”

“He’s the same age as I am! And how does it matter?”

“Touché,” Reggie says, to John. “After all, we’re not defined by our relationships, are we? I’ll take a seat, then.”

He moves gracefully, sits down on the sofa with one leg crossed over the other. John watches him sniff discreetly and then throw John a knowing smile. God, what a git.

“Isn’t it polite to ask us if we want some tea, John?”

Ray shoots him a glare but he ignores her, arches an eyebrow at John.

“Neither of us is polite,” comes a voice from the hallway, and John almost sags in relief. Christ, he was completely out of his depth with these two here. Who are they? And why has Sherlock allowed them inside? “And I assume you’ve come here for something important, not to impose on our hospitality.”

Sherlock sweeps into the living room, dressed in a clean shirt and jeans, and sits down elegantly on the armchair opposite to Ray, smelling absolutely nothing like John. Instead, it’s the clear, neutralising body wash he uses sometimes, which smells vaguely like vanilla. A classic Beta scent. No one would be able to tell he’d been draped over the sofa a few minutes earlier, damp with sweat and slick, begging John to -
“Ray,” he greets, pulling John out of reminiscing. He nods at her curtly. “Bit better circumstances than our last meeting, clearly. And who are you?” he turns to Reggie and gives him a swift once-over. “Ah. Family money. You’ve grown up on an estate. West Sussex, I believe. Does your mother make you wear that awful choker, or do you enjoy advertising yourself like a piece of meat?”

“You know, most OAs advocate for sexual liberty,” Reggie doesn’t seem put off at all by Sherlock’s insult, and instead continues to smile mildly at him, fingering the ring attached to the leather.

Sherlock snorts. “And you think awakening old, regressive practices is the way to go about it? How very entitled of you. Now, tell me,” he leans back, steeples his fingers under his chin and looks expectantly between the two of them. “There’s a problem which you want me to solve. I’d prefer not to waste any more time, so get on with it.”

John decides to take a seat next to Reggie on the sofa, because clearly there’s nowhere else for him to sit. Reggie turns to him and smiles brightly. “Ah, John,” he pats his thigh. “I was wondering when you would stop feeling so awkward.”

“Uh,” John glances at Sherlock, whose eyes narrow at Reggie’s hand on him, but doesn’t say anything. Instead he turns back to Ray, raising an eyebrow.

“Oh,” Ray startles. “Actually, it’s Reggie’s… thing. He’s my cousin, he told me about it and I thought you could help. I heard you help the Yard sometimes, and Reggie wanted a private consultant.”

“I’m not a consultant,” Sherlock clarifies. “I’m not anything, really. I do it when I’m bored. Alright, then, Reggie.” His mouth pulls up in one of those terrifying smiles, all teeth, as he looks at him. “Go on, then.”

“I was led to believe you can take one look at people and tell what they’re thinking,” Reggie asserts, leaning forward and cradling his cheek in his palm. “Do you turn it on and off then?”

“Capital mistake to theorise before you have all the facts. I do this as an alternative to getting high, so start talking or I’m going to have to shoot up to escape all of this tediousness.”

“No you won’t,” John says quickly, glaring at him. Sherlock rolls his eyes and huffs, after which he makes a “get on with it” gesture at Reggie.
As soon as they’ve left and the door is closed, Sherlock turns to John with a grin that lights up all of his features. He lets the excitement show on his face, and it’s fucking adorable, because moments ago he was hiding it, trying to seem aloof and disengaged as he usually is, while practically buzzing with energy deep inside.

“John, did you hear that? Did you? Not quite murder, but a buried mystery in an old manor house? Oh, this is brilliant.” He claps his hands and jumps a little, and John can’t help it, he laughs along with him.

“Yeah. Although can’t say I like Reggie very much,” he crosses his arms over his chest and scowls at the door. Fucking entitled prick. With that smug little smirk, and the condescending voice.

“Oh, Reginald is just extremely attracted to you,” Sherlock replies airily, moving away from the door and covering the distance between them with a few short steps. He clasps John’s wrists in his hands, pulls him closer. “And failing to hide it.”

John snorts disbelievingly. “Doubtful.”

“Forget about him. We’re going to see enough of him soon,” he pauses, and he continues after that a little uncertainly. “That is. If you’ll come with me. I simply assumed… I understand taking a trip together might seem like an enormous step, but it’s only for solving the case-“

John curls his fingers into the collar of Sherlock’s shirt, forces him to bend down so he can kiss him. It’s over the weekend, so he won’t miss class, and besides, as if he could sit idly by while Sherlock sauntered into an old estate all alone in fucking Sussex, with Reginald Musgrave and his damn omega collar. “Of course I’ll come with you.”

Sherlock hums in approval, kisses him back for a few more seconds before he pulls away. Uncertainty still rests on his features, and he ducks his head, still holding on to John’s wrist. “You don’t mind…” he looks up, then, and his gaze is unsure, his voice soft. “You don’t mind… continuing later? What we were. Um. Doing. Before?” His cheeks blaze with the question, and John wants to kiss him some more, if for no other reason that he’s being ridiculous. His hand swipes up the side of his neck, and he buries his fingers in Sherlock’s hair.

“I know what you’re like during a case. Remember that serial rapist one? It’s fine, Sherlock. Really.”
“It’s just that… it’s distracting and I can’t focus on both of them at once. It’s difficult for me, especially without chemical stimulants.” He cocks his head and lets go of John, before fitting his palm against his crotch. John’s eyes widen at the sudden movement, and his half hard cock suddenly twitches.

“Christ, Sher -“

“I could. I could, if you wanted. You didn’t-“

“Jesus, no, stop. Stop. It’s fine.” He pushes him away and shakes his head. “You don’t have to. Look. Solve the case, and then we’ll have all the time later, yeah? Besides,” He wraps his arms around Sherlock’s waist, pulls him into a half-embrace. “Now I know what you like.”

Sherlock flushes again, his gaze dropping. “You’re distracting me.”

“I know. It’s the last time, I swear. So, when do we leave?”

***

John watches Sherlock pack an hour later, not quite able to shake a strange sort of discomfort. It’s not as though he minds at all that they’d stopped, or that Sherlock wanted to solve this case, or that they were taking a train to Sussex the next morning without a great deal of prior planning. In fact, he couldn’t place his fucking finger on it and it was annoying the hell out of him.

He can’t help but feel that Sherlock would find something more exciting, another distraction, and it’s so stupid, juvenile, practically. He knows. He knows that he’s not being logical.

Still, listening to Sherlock prattle on about the case and the possible angles they could work on it from, John feels slightly unsure, and uncertainty settles in his gut, dark and ominous.

***
For some reason, I keep picturing Chaneil Kular from Sex Education as my Reggie, so I suppose we'll stick with that casting image.
Chapter Summary

“It’s alright,” he says quietly. “I won’t touch you. Now tell me what I should do.”

Chapter Notes

Whoop whoop we have a chapter count! Also sorry for dumping this huge-ass chapter on you guys I guess but I have no self control when it comes to chapter length.

Also thank you Chemical_Defect, without your invaluable help I would never have written this so quickly~

Before I forget: thank you SO MUCH to everyone who has been following this story. Your kind words and kudos mean the world to me. Please leave me some more if you can! :> :>

I was moving across your frozen veneer
The sky was dark but you were clear
Could you feel my footsteps
And would you shatter, would you shatter, would you

And with your soft fingers between my claws
Like purity against resolve

Great Lake Swimmers, Your Rocky Spine

Part Three: try explaining a life bundled with episodes of this
“I suppose I owe you an explanation.”

Ray startles, almost dropping the kettle she has under the tap. Wide eyes turn towards him, regard him carefully. “No, Sherlock, it’s…I’m sorry. I didn’t know you were clean, I-“

Sherlock sighs, shakes his head, walks into the kitchen to stand next to her in front of the sink. He takes the kettle from her shaking hands, fills it to the brim and puts it on to boil. She’d slinked away after Reggie was finished telling him about the case, offering to make them all some tea. “I wasn’t clean then,” he continues, quietly. He doesn’t meet her eyes. “I shouldn’t have left you there alone. I think Mycroft- my brother. He sent someone after you?”

He glances at her, and she nods. “Yeah. I was pretty out of it. They dropped me home, gave me some meds. Reggie came all the way from Sussex, tried to get me to detox,” she sighs, and her shoulders slump. “I don’t know. It’s not easy, is it?”

“No,” Sherlock agrees, and God, does he know it. He hadn’t even spoken to the girl before she’d propositioned him in class, and five minutes later they were vomiting over each other in some toxic dump of a flat. She’d seen him at one of his worst moments, and if Sherlock is good at anything, it’s avoiding people who remind him of just how low he can go.

“I’m glad that you…er, well. I’m glad you’re sober,” she rubs her arm self-consciously, biting her lip as she looks at him. “Is John your- er, mate?”

Sherlock closes his eyes and listens to the water boil, the steady whistling sound of the kettle. Is John his mate? What an odd question. Sherlock doesn’t really know how to define what John is to him, simply because John eludes definition all the time. Boyfriends seems like a juvenile word. Mates is loaded with far too much meaning than he can handle. “Of a sort,” he finally settles upon answering.

“He helps? With the…staying clean thing?” She turns around and cocks a hip against the counter, looks at him with, seemingly half-expecting Sherlock to tell her off for asking questions.

“He helps,” Sherlock agrees. He pauses, sends her a sidelong glance and takes a depth breath before continuing. “If you’re looking for advice on sobriety, I’m not the best person to ask. I’ve nearly OD’d twice and staying clean right now is taking every ounce of self-control I have. If I
somehow manage to overdose again, my brother will, in all probability, cart me off to rehab and I’ll never see John again. So.”

He swallows, and the weight of the admission hurts his chest. He’s never admitted these things to himself before, and saying them to Ray might not have the best of ideas. Saying them out loud wasn’t the best of ideas, full stop.

“I-“ Ray dithers, drums her fingers on the counter. “I think Reggie wants to send me to rehab. I’d never be able to afford it on my own, he’s offered- do you- do you think I should…”

She trails off and when Sherlock looks at her, her eyes are a little wet. “We’re not friends,” he tells her firmly. Ray flinches at the brusqueness. It’s not fair, he knows. But he can’t do this. He can’t be responsible for someone else’s decisions, not when he takes such spectacularly awful decisions himself. He can’t afford to cultivate any more relationships, when it’s already so difficult, holding on to John. “I’m sorry, Ray,” he continues, softer. “I really can’t tell you. You’ll have to see for yourself.” He shrugs, the kettle whistles.

“Right,” Ray nods, as if she’d expected it. “Right, obviously. Sorry, I-“

“Don’t apologise. It’s just-“

“Thanks for helping Reggie. I know he acts like a prat, but it’s been hard on him since his parents died, and this whole thing with Brunton, and Rachel-“

“They were close, Brunton and Reggie?” Sherlock asks, tries not to let curiosity colour his voice too much. Although, unless Ray is spectacularly ignorant, she must know that’s a question clearly in relation to the case.

Ray stills for a few seconds before nodding in assent, and then opens her mouth to say something but Reggie chooses that time to interrupt them.

“Holmes, it’s ever so polite of you to entertain us for longer than you have to, but we’d best get on. And I think your friend John is uncomfortable around me.”

Uncomfortable. Sherlock snorts. Barely a few minutes ago he was-
Best not to think about that, though. No now. Distracting.

Sherlock turns around and sees Reggie leaning against the frame that divides the kitchen from the hallway, arms crossed over his chest. He tries not to scowl at the sight of him. He’s not even sure if he really does dislike him, or if it’s his unpleasant manner of smearing his scent all over John that rankles him so much. Ray squeezes his hand once before rushing out of the kitchen, evidently feeling awkward after their conversation. Reggie still stands there, though, and his smile is slightly knowing.

“I know why you actually wear that horrendous collar around your neck,” Sherlock says, turning off the boiling kettle. When he looks at Reggie again, he’s gone half a shade paler.

“Ray did tell me you were a bit of a git,” he answers, but it hardly has any snark.

Sherlock covers the distance between the two of them, takes Reggie’s fine-boned hand in his own. “Index and middle finger, broken. Healed badly, still a bit crooked. Scars on your knuckles, from teeth marks. Human teeth marks. Alpha incisors, to be precise. Deep, haphazard. As if not in control. You were protecting the back of your neck from a Bite. Couldn’t manage, could you? You probably got the bond Dissolved, it’s easy for someone of your class and upbringing. But the collar itself does more than hide the remnants, it’s an identity you can’t quite rid of. An old heirloom, the O-ring has been mended thrice but the leather hasn’t. It’s a bit frayed there, at the side. Passed down two generations, I’d say.”

Reggie rips his hand out of his grasp, his eyes are wide and dark, his lips pressed down into a hard line. The tops of his cheeks are flushed. “Being a pompous, promiscuous prat suits me just fine,” he snaps.

“You do realise it used to be a symbol of ownership, of sexual slavery,” Sherlock prompts, and Reggie scowls at him.

“Exactly. People will make assumptions, just as you did,” he clenches his fist at his side and Sherlock feels guilty, suddenly. He should have kept his mouth shut. After all, Reggie’s manner of trying to carve out an identity for himself is not as different from his, is it? Perhaps it’s what he wants, to be considered as an airhead, rather than a victim, or worse. And if he’s not as clever as he pretends to be, he must probably still be considering Sherlock a Beta. Sherlock grimaces inwardly at the thought of a male Beta or Alpha trying to tell him what an omega collar represented, trying to school him on his own oppressive history.
“God, you’re one of those well-meaning Beta activists, aren’t you?” Reggie crosses his arms over his chest and smirks. Sherlock rolls his eyes with a huff. Beta activist. How dull. He opens his mouth to say as much, but Reggie doesn’t let him.

“Must be difficult, living with an Alpha,” he suddenly says, changing the subject. “They’ve got awful tempers, always grating against your nerves. Huffing and puffing. Especially when they’re with a Beta. Although John seems… a bit tame, doesn’t he?” Reggie turns his head to regard John, and Sherlock doesn’t particularly like the way his gaze rakes over him. John seems oblivious to this, making small talk with Ray, smiling politely and laughing when the situation calls for it.

“He’s not tame,” Sherlock suddenly blurs out, and Reggie turns to him sharply, smirk widening, as if he’d expected that response.

“And you’d know,” he surmises, and his voice drips with innuendo. Sherlock tenses his jaw.

“Whatever you’re implying-“

“I’m not implying anything.” His eyes sparkle with intent, and his hand digs into the pocket of his well-tailoured trousers. He extracts a strip of pills, exactly two. Bright blue. Puts them on the counter, and Sherlock’s heart stutters in his chest.

“They’re illegal, but I’m sure you know that they’re getting hard to come by these days. I’ll pay you in cash too, of course. But…a little extra incentive wouldn’t be amiss, I think.” He moves it towards Sherlock with one slender finger. Sherlock wants to say something, but his mouth doesn’t seem to be working.


Reggie scoffs. “Please, Holmes. I know an omega when I see one. Don’t worry, it probably isn’t obvious to everyone. Although, there’s hardly any point hiding when it’s on your ID.”

Sherlock reaches forward and takes the blister pack, very much aware of Reggie’s widening grin as he does so. He pockets it, his cheeks burning. It’s the only practical thing to do, he would be a complete idiot if he let this offer go. His last batch of suppressants is over, and while Mycroft is annoying at the best of times, he wouldn’t keep them from Sherlock unless it really was a problem getting them. Even at the expense of Reggie getting something to hold over his head. He was only trying to get back at him, and he’d succeeded. Begrudgingly, Sherlock admires him.
“You’re welcome,” he purrs. Sherlock just glares.

“Now then,” he continues briskly, “Raven and I will be leaving. I can email you train tickets to Sussex by tonight-“

“Raven?”

‘Yeah, Raven Musgrave. That’s her name. Ray, if you prefer. Anyway, I’ll see you tomorrow, then, Holmes.” When he smiles at him now the previous bravado returns, well-bred cockiness settling over his slender shoulders like a second skin.

Sherlock grabs his arm before he leaves, stilling his movement. Reggie pauses, looks back at him, between Sherlock’s pale fingered grip and his face. He raises an eyebrow.

“He’s off-limits,” Sherlock tells him, his voice low enough for it to be a growl.

“John?” Reggie cocks his head.

“No, my toaster. Of course, John. If you’ve already figured out my secondary gender there’s no point dancing about it.”

“I’ll keep it in mind.” Reggie tugs his arm out of Sherlock’s grasp and Sherlock lets him, unease settling in his stomach in an unaccountable way.

Jealousy, his mind supplies unhelpfully. He’s never felt it this way, so intensely. No. Not exactly jealousy. Covetousness. Possession. John is his. People shouldn’t be looking at him… like that. There may not be any physical evidence of a Bite, but he was still… his. It shouldn’t have mattered, monogamy was always implied between the two of them. But Reggie… Sherlock looks at his gazelle-like movements and his blemish-free forearms and feels slightly ill.

John wouldn’t. Of course not.
Still, the unease doesn’t fade, especially when Reggie calls John “love” when he leaves, tells him he looks forward to seeing him tomorrow. Sherlock steps into the living room to say goodbye to Ray, Reggie winks at him before he steps out.

Compartmentalising this would be good. His emotions were going to get the better of him and he wouldn’t be able to solve this case, and the Case was important. The Work was important, it kept him off drugs, and keeping off drugs meant John would stay.

***

John feels vaguely as though he’s stepped into a period drama when the cab pulls into Hurlstone. He’s never been around these kinds of… mansions? Mansion is probably a good word to use. He’s grown up in a council estate, never been exposed to such opulence. Sherlock, however, with the posh edges of his accent and the Alpha brother who looks like he belongs to the elite 1% of the population, clearly comes from wealth.

“You’re wrong,” Sherlock suddenly says, off-hand.

John turns to look at him while they’re being led up the stairs by a butler. (Another butler. John hopes he doesn’t fall to whatever ominous fate Brunton has fallen to) Sherlock rolls his eyes at his incredulous expression. “Obvious, you kept looking around and then looking at me. Mycroft and I grew up comfortable, yes. But my father is a businessman, not landed gentry.”

John shrugs, used to his thoughts being a matter of public knowledge when it comes to Sherlock. He’s glad he’s speaking, at least. During the train ride he’d been mostly quiet, muttering to himself while he looked at the ritual instructions that Reggie had left him with, occasionally complaining to John. He always knew Sherlock wouldn’t do well in confined spaces, but the trip had been proof.

John had suggested he tell him what he thought of the case, but Sherlock had only snapped at him. “Evaluating data before you have all the facts is an idiot’s method. What do they teach you in medical school?” But the instructions on the paper had seemed very much like the instructions towards buried treasure, which John had mused aloud. Sherlock had scoffed, then looked intrigued, and then retreated further into himself.

Deciding not to get into it when he was clearly in a mood, John had backed off. Fighting with
Sherlock when he was frustrated always led to situations that took a very long time control.

“Well,” John says when they reach the landing. “You can’t blame me for assuming. You did tell me ages ago that you were a trust fund child.”

“A trust fund I rarely ever access because Mycroft believes I will use the money to purchase cocaine,” Sherlock points out.

Reggie waits for them on the landing, dressed in tailored trousers and a shirt as he was the previous night. He shakes Sherlock’s hand and John’s, although John’s handshake lasts a little longer than strictly required.

“Is it just you in this… estate, then?” John asks, shrugging out of his grip.

Reggie smirks. “Yes. Just me. All alone, a young omega in a huge mansion. My parents are dead, if you remember.”

“Er-“

“Your flair for the dramatic clearly rivals mine,” Sherlock interjects, holding out his hand. “You’re here to give us the keys to our rooms, I assume. Pleased don’t waste my time.”

“Rude,” Reggie complains, eyes sparkling. He looks at John. “Is he always like this?”

John foregoes answering in favour of shrugging his shoulders. Reggie makes a comically disappointed look and drops the keys in Sherlock’s palm. “Well. Dinner’s at seven, the grounds are yours to explore. If you have need of me, just call me. You can question the staff as per your convenience.”

He inclines his head towards both of them and walks past them down the hallway, brushing his fingers over John’s arm as he does.

John shivers a bit, body reacting to it before his brain can make sense of the touch. He has to blink a few times once Reggie has left, and when he turns ahead to look at Sherlock to see if he’s noticed it
at all, the git’s already unlocked the door by himself and stepped inside. John follows suit, eyes roaming over the sparsely furnished but elegant bedroom. Sherlock is busy throwing open the curtains to let more light into the room.

“He gave us two keys,” he mutters, jumping into the bed without preamble, one leg tucked underneath him and the other foot resting on the floor. He takes out the sheet of paper with the ritual instructions from his shirt pocket and starts reading it again, just as he was doing on the train.

“Two keys?” John asks, already thinking, with a growing sense of certainty that Sherlock wouldn’t be up for conversation much longer. His eyes already have that faraway, glassy look.

“Two bedrooms,” Sherlock answers shortly.

Obviously. Reggie probably still thinks Sherlock is a beta, and the enormous mansion has enough rooms for them not to need to share. Speaking of Reggie; John pinches the front of his shirt and brings it up to his nose; ugh. He smells like him. He wrinkles his nose, the scent bordering on offensive. He wonders why it doesn’t cling to Sherlock’s skin as much. Might be the suppressants, because he still smells like he usually does; shampoo, soap, and the dull, baseless undertone of suppressants.

“I’m going to take a shower,” he tells Sherlock. Sherlock doesn’t reply. He’s already cross-legged on the bed, still in his trainers, head ducked.

John decides against calling him again, slightly out of spite. There’s an en-suite in the bedroom. John steps into it, still in his clothes. He shuts the door behind him, leans his head against the cool tile and shuts his eyes for a moment. It doesn’t make sense for him to be annoyed, at all, really. He didn’t want Sherlock to think that John held the cases against him; besides, if he was working, he wasn’t using, which was a plus.

***

When he steps outside in a towel, Sherlock is, unsurprisingly, not there. John pulls on jeans and a shirt, pulls a jumper over his head and goes in search of him. He knows Sherlock will probably be safe here, he might have left to investigate the oak tree he was talking about, or gone to ask the staff about Rachel and Brunton.

He ends up walking outside, on to the grounds. It’s cold. John pulls his sweater tighter around
himself. He doesn’t find Sherlock at first, but there is Reggie instead, seemingly in the middle of taking a walk, standing in front of something that looks suspiciously like a barn.

“John,” he greets him, with his familiar smirk, a cigarette poised halfway between his mouth. “Has he run off on his own? You should keep him on a leash.”

Do you ever get tired of being a prat, John thinks to himself, not saying the words. He walks up towards Reggie, hands stuffed in his pockets. “Have you seen him?”

“Maybe,” he offers his cigarette to John, hangs it in front of him between two fingers. John declines. God, Reggie reminds him of Sherlock sometimes, and it’s vaguely unsettling. They both have the smug air of knowing more than the people around them, both of them confident in their bodies, only Reggie seems to enjoy deploying his physical charm more often than usual.

He wonders if he should make small talk. He’d rather not, considering how uncomfortable Reggie makes him. He would like to know what Reggie does all day, does he have a job? Is he a college graduate?

“I manage the estate,” he tells John, suddenly, and why is John surrounded by people who can read his mind? Reggie scoffs.

“No, I’m not the same as Sherlock, not by a long shot. But clearly you’re too polite to just walk away and look for your mate, so I’ll make the small talk for both of us, since you’re also too awkward to start.” He flicks a bit of ash off his cigarette. “I have a degree in chemical engineering,” he adds. “And I’m allergic to horses, which is why there’s a barn, but with no living creatures inside it,” he points to the cabin-like structure behind him. “Just hay.”

“Oh,” John says surprised. And then, suddenly realising what he’s just said, “Sherlock isn’t my mate.”

Reggie raises his eyebrows. “I’m not blind, pet. The two of you are practically bonded, anyone would notice,” he steps forward, bridging the distance. “Although-“ he lightly runs a palm down John’s front. John swallows.

“Er-“
“Pity,” Reggie murmurs. “I’d pay more attention to you, if I was Sherlock. Not very nice of him to leave you here alone. Not very good at this- relationship thing, is he?”

John steps back, tries to put more distance between the two of them. Reggie’s scent was doing funny things to his head, making it difficult to think. “I’ll just- I think I should go. Find him.”

Reggie smiles, all teeth, and obligingly steps away from him, raising his hands, palms towards John in a gesture of surrender. “You’re all his,” he says. “I was just paying you a compliment. Forgive me for being so forward, John,” he says the last bit with a softer tone, and he sounds almost sincere. His eyes are wide and he inclines his head a bit. Submission, an omega gesture to appease an Alpha. It doesn’t sit right with John.

“You don’t have to- do that,” he says, holding up a hand. “Don’t- it’s fine. Really. Look, we’re here to solve the case, yeah? Find out what happened to Rachel and Brunton.”

Reggie’s cheeks colour, and he looks down for a second, as if to compose himself. When he looks back up he is smiling, but it’s fragile and doesn’t reach his eyes. Ah. Burton’s disappearance must have affected him more strongly than they’d expected. “Yes,” he replies. “Yes, of course.”

John licks his lips, feeling nervous, but he soldiers on. “The Musgrave Ritual-“

“I told you, John. My father died before he could tell me about it. And now it’s just a piece of paper with meaningless gibberish on it. *Whose was it, His who is gone, who shall have it*- I know it by heart. Brunton must have figured something out when he stole it from the library. I don’t care if it’s buried treasure and he wants it for himself. Who gives a shit? I have enough money,” he makes a sweeping gesture towards the mansion. “My father left enough for me behind. But I would have expected him to tell me, that’s all. Running off like a coward, who does that? And what about Rachel?” Reggie sounds winded by the end of it, breathless, having worked himself into something like a fit.

“Rachel- the maid he was seeing before- er, Jannet?”

Reggie nods, finally dropping his cigarette and stubbing it under his foot. Reggie had described Brunton as “a bit of a slag”, having tried to bond with the head housekeeper’s daughter, Rachel, and then going after- Janet, right-the gamekeeper’s daughter. When Reggie had caught him stealing the paper that had turned out to be so important- he’d been fired with a week’s notice.
“Yes, and then he fucking vanished, and then so did Rachel,” Reggie says frustratedly under his breath, before running a hand through his dark hair. “All I want is an answer, John. What did he want? And why didn’t he tell me? Is he okay? Is Rachel?” He shrugs, and John is a little taken aback by Reggie’s emotion; it’s odd, considering the bloke is so different, otherwise. His smugness disappears for a few minutes, and it’s difficult for John not to reach forward and touch his shoulder, comfort him. But it could be an unwelcome gesture, and he’s not sure how Reggie would interpret it.

“Reggie, we’re here to help,” John says, and Reggie looks up at him, half smiling.

“I know you are, John. Sherlock’s at the tree, near the main entrance, if you were wondering. I’ll see you, then. Let me know if you have any questions.”

He leaves before John can say goodbye to him. He can see him taking out another cigarette from his pocket, lighting it and raising it to his lips. Smoke curls lightly in the air.

***

John reaches Sherlock just in time to see him kicking the trunk of the enormous oak tree, growling out a string of expletives. They always sound out of place and filthier in Sherlock’s posher tones.

“Fuck,” he seethes again, kicks the tree a second time. The tree doesn’t even budge, but a few leaves flutter down.

“Sherlock,” John calls for him, deciding to stay a few feet away. Sherlock doesn’t hear him, or does hear him and wilfully chooses not to answer. Either way, it pricks at him and that makes him feel guilty, because he’s allowing Reggie’s words to settle into his head, and it’s not fair, because he knows Sherlock and he’s like that, and John adores him just the way he is.

Sherlock kicks the tree a third time and he finally decides to intervene. Covers the distance between them, grabs him by the bicep gently. John can smell his distress, and it calls out to the protective urge inside of him, encouraging him to find the cause of his distress and make it disappear.

“Don’t, you’ll get hurt,” he says softly, and Sherlock’s shoulders slump. He exhales roughly through his teeth, turns around with one hand tangled in his hair, looking wild-eyed and desperate. John’s heart stutters in his chest at the expression, and his hand slips down to curl around Sherlock’s slender wrists.

“Hey, what is it? Did you find something?” He looks around, expecting Sherlock to have dug up
something, but the place is as pristine as ever.

Sherlock squeezes his eyes shut, lifts the hand not in John’s grip to his face, digs it into the hollow of his eyes. “No,” he whispers. “John, I don’t understand. I followed everything, I checked and double checked, it has to be here, but it isn’t. There’s nothing here, I don’t understand.”

And those are words that Sherlock rarely says, because the man understands (mostly) everything. Everything of ‘importance’, at least. John feels slightly faint at the waves of distress coming off of him, they wrap around somewhere in the vicinity of his ribs, and it’s unbearable, not being able to comfort him, not being able to stop it.

“That’s okay. Sherlock. Hey, look at me,” John tugs his hand away from his face and Sherlock looks at him, lips pursed. “Come on. Let’s just- come with me. Take a break.”

“No, I can’t, I have to-“ he tries to twist out of his grasp, makes a vague gesture towards the tree. Nervous anxiety, John feels it, an uncomfortable pounding in his ears, a weight against his chest. He makes a disapproving noise, more of a growl and Sherlock stills, regards him with wide eyes.

“I need to solve it,” Sherlock notifies him breathlessly. “I need something to-“

“No,” John says, and even he is surprised by the threatening edge in his voice. He doesn’t mean to, but lately his instincts have been completely out of his control, and the panic he feels at the desperate urgency in Sherlock’s voice does nothing to tamp it down. Sherlock trembles a bit under his grasp, ducks his head to look down at his feet.

“I’m so slow, John. It would help. It’s easier that way, I could solve it quicker-“

“Hey,” John cups his hands around his ears, swipes his fingers under the thick curtain of his curls and lifts his face so that they can look at each other. Sherlock looks entirely too vulnerable and upset, and it’s making his gut twist uncomfortably. “You don’t need anything. You know why? Because you’re Sherlock Holmes, and you’re as clever as it gets. And since when have you ever done things the easy way, hmm?”

Sherlock sighs, his shoulders slump, and he leans his forehead against John’s. And just like that, his irritation vanishes. It shouldn’t have persisted as long as it did, anyway, but still. Sherlock needs him.

Warm breath ghosts over John’s face and he would kiss him, he absolutely would, only Sherlock has banned any kind of sexual touching for the duration of this case so he settles for running his hands
down until they curl around the sides of his neck, his thumbs stroking the sharp edges of his jaw.

“Why don’t we take a break, hmm?” This part is easy, John knows how to do this: offer comfort. Sherlock needs him, needs him to tame the dizzying chaos inside of his head and John can help.

Sherlock opens his eyes and squints at him. “I don’t take breaks,” he says, rather sullenly.

“It’s freezing out here and you’re considering shooting up. I think five minutes won’t completely rewire your brain and make you forget all the brilliant deductions you’ve been making so far.”

Sherlock makes a surprised noise, as if he hadn’t considered this possibility, and John rolls his eyes. He steps away from him, takes him by the wrist, and tugs him along. Sherlock huffs at first, his body rigid, but he consents to following him a few seconds later.

“Where are you taking me?” he asks, suspicious. John only turns around and grins at him. Late afternoon sunlight makes the black of his hair turn auburn, and Sherlock does look so lovely when his cheeks are coloured by the cold and he’s wind-blown. He frowns when John doesn’t answer him, but it’s only a few minutes till John finds what he was looking for, a few minutes of walking through the expansive grounds with Sherlock grumbling mutinously behind him.

By the time he manages to drag him to the stable that Reggie had pointed out, they’re both shivering from the draft.

“A barn?” Sherlock’s mouth twists, he glances dubiously at John as he slides the bolt from the lock and pushes the door open.

“It’s warm inside,” John defends, pulling him inside. It certainly is warm, and a tad bit musty. No horses, only abandoned pens and a great deal of hay cover the ground

“No horses,” Sherlock murmurs, walks around the room as John closes the door shut, running long fingers over aged wood.

“Yeah, Reggie is allergic to them, apparently.”
Sherlock’s languid exploration stops, and he turns sharply towards John. He leans one hip against a pen, eyes narrow. “So that’s why you smell like pine. Reggie’s scent is very distinctive. Far too strong. What else have you uncovered about him, John?” Sherlock strides towards him, all graceful limbs and lithe body, pushes him up against the closed door, cages him effectively with his arms.

Oh. This is…unexpected.

“Er,” hadn’t Sherlock banned this kind of thing, precisely? John feels dizzy at the proximity, as he always does. There are too many layers between them, he really needs to get Sherlock’s coat off, find the skin underneath, dig his fingers in. Sherlock cocks his head and regards him mischievously, mouth turned up in amusement.

“If you really wanted me to get my mind off the case for a few moments, you wouldn’t take me to an enclosed space smelling so strongly of another omega, would you? That hardly seems fair,” he leans forward, presses his nose to the spot just underneath John’s ear, sniffs harshly.

He pulls back immediately, twisting his mouth in disgust and wrinkling his nose. “Awful. You smell awful. I hate it. What were you even doing with him?” The last part is supposed to sound casual, John can tell. It doesn’t, though.

John finds his footing now that Sherlock isn’t pressed up so close towards him and gives him a crooked smile. “Just talking about the case. Jealous?”

“Of Reggie?” Sherlock scoffs. “Please.” But it’s not entirely convincing, given that Sherlock’s cheeks are still flushed pink and John can practically smell his possessiveness. It’s subtle, makes his throat burn, but it’s there, alright. He watches as Sherlock slips off his coat, hangs it over the edge of a pen. He rolls his eyes when he catches John’s expression, because John knows he looks smug and self-satisfied right now, and Sherlock turns away from him with a huff.

“There’s a loft,” he points out, raising one long fingered hand towards the ladder propped up in the corner, leading towards an opening in the ceiling. Obviously Sherlock needs to find out what is at the top of the ladder, and John follows him, deciding to take advantage of the situation and ogle at Sherlock’s arse as he climbs up in front of him.

The space is small, there’s an empty cot pushed up to the side where the sloping ceiling meets the floor. Most of the ground is covered by bales of hay. John finds an empty bit of ground and sits down, cross legged, leans against the wooden wall and splays his legs. “I have an idea,” he calls out to Sherlock, who is busy inspecting the tiny window above the cot. Sherlock turns towards him, dark eyebrow raised,
“Are you going to tell me about what other allergies Reggie has? Should we carry a hypodermic needle, just in case?”

“I don’t want to talk about Reggie. Come here,” he points to the vee between his legs.

“John, while a roll in the hay sounds passably pleasant, I thought you were amenable to waiting, and considering my skin is crawling right now with the need to shoot up—“

John cocks his head and makes a more determined gesture to the spot between his legs and Sherlock rolls his eyes, but obeys, sidesteps a few piles of hay until sitting down in front of John, fitting himself between his spread legs. Sherlock’s bird like frame fits nicely there, and John slowly curls his hands over his elbows, slides them upward until they cup his bony shoulders. He should be wearing something warmer, but the only thing that separates their skin is his plain white shirt.

“John—” he starts to say, but it melts into a whisper when John squeezes, digs his thumbs into the spots just above the wings of his back.

“Oh.”

“Five minutes,” John promises, continues to knead the muscle. As expected, Sherlock goes limp and boneless underneath his hands, bends his head so that the back of his neck is right there, pale and vulnerable.

“That’s… hmm. That’s good. I’ve never—“

John presses downwards, over the knobs of his spine. Can hear the joints pop under his fingers. Sherlock rolls his shoulders and fuck, that’s sexy. John needs to concentrate.

“Never what?”

Sherlock breathes in deeply, pushes more firmly back against John as if silently asking for more. “No one’s ever…” he shakes his head as if it’s unimportant, trivial, as if the fact that no one has ever touched Sherlock in a non-sexual way, as if the fact that no one has ever tried to offer him physical comfort without fucking him after is trivial.
John knows what his silences mean, and it only takes all of his willpower not to let rage dictate his movements. He keeps his fingers steady and gentle, finds the hollows above his waist and continues.

“It’s okay,” John says, presses a soft kiss over a shoulder blade. “You like it? Bit quieter in there now?”

Sherlock hums in response. If John concentrates very hard, he can feel his contentment. It’s less terrifying now, being able to read Sherlock’s emotions. He chalks it down to their relationship, people who are attached to each other are always very empathetic. It’s nothing special.

“No one’s ever touched me like this before, is what I- what I wanted to say,” he says quietly, after a few moments, and John’s chest hurts at the words. “So. Er…thank you?”

“Shhh,” John can’t help it, he stops the massage for a second, wraps his arms around Sherlock’s waist, pulls him back against his chest so they fit against each other perfectly. Sherlock sighs in contentment lays his head back against John’s shoulder and allows him to press a kiss against his temple. This is John’s favourite part; when Sherlock knowingly trusts him, allows him to see him like this.

“You can ask for it, you know,” he says, softly. “If you want this. And not- not anything else. You can ask for it whenever you want, and I’ll do exactly what you want, nothing more, nothing less. Okay?”

Sherlock opens his eyes and looks at him. “Five more minutes?” he asks, a tad uncertain, and John grins.

“Yes, Sir,” he replies, and gently pushes Sherlock back up so he can reach his back.

This time he is rewarded with louder groans, and Sherlock must know that they sound distinctly sexual, but the git doesn’t relent. John’s fingers play over his back, his shoulders, his ribs, his waist. The back of his neck is an extremely sensitive spot, and if John kneads it properly Sherlock will squirm where he’s sitting and try to press himself against John’s front.

“None of that,” John scolds, curling a curl around his finger and pulling. “You’re going to get me all hot and bothered, and I won’t be held responsible for my actions.”

Sherlock huffs a laugh at that, and is then blissfully silent. John works him over until he’s soft and
plicable under his fingers. He’s about to mention that five minutes are probably over and shouldn’t they get back to the case- when suddenly Sherlock shivers. It’s not a shiver of pleasure, or at least, not natural pleasure- he exhales sharply, and then a soft whine. John’s gaze is drawn to his fingers, which were previously loosely hanging over his knees- and now grip forcefully into the material of his jeans.

“Sherlock, what’s wrong-“ oh. John smells it then, and God, what is that? He grips the edge of a shoulder, pulls Sherlock towards him so he can sniff his neck, where the scent is stronger. Sherlock’s natural fragrance, and something sweeter- riper. John’s already wrapped an arm around his middle and pulled him against his chest so he can smear his mouth over the back of his neck when he realises what he’s doing. He lets go of him, tries to move away in blind panic. How is this even happening?

“Sherlock, you’re-“

“Fuck,” Sherlock hisses, takes the momentary break in physical contact and crawls away from John- why, though? He should be closer to him- until he’s at the other end, turns around so he can lean against the wall, knees against his chest. “Pre-heat,” he says quickly, and he’s already pressing a finger against the side of his throat, taking his pulse. “Your proximity-” he throws his head back as a shudder weaves through his body, making him raise his hips from the ground, and John has to bite his lip until it hurts to distract himself from it.

His heart rate speeds up, sweat gathers at his temples, and his fingers tremble with the effort of not just- shit. He stands up shakily, looks down at Sherlock, who is on the ground, mouth open and eyes already starting to turn glassy. “What should I do,” John says, far too loudly. “Tell me what to do. God, Sherlock-“ he makes a step towards him and Sherlock’s eyes widen in fear, and it’s like being doused with cold water. He steps back, holds up his hands in surrender.

“It’s alright,” he says quietly. “I won’t touch you. Now tell me what I should do.” It takes a great deal of self-control to say that, because it has suddenly become imperative that John get as close as possible to Sherlock.

Knowing that Sherlock doesn’t want to be touched right now helps, tames the instinct to just grab him- and- John doesn’t know what he’d do after that, once he has Sherlock in his grasp, pinned up against some surface-

“John!”

“Sorry,” John swallows, and Sherlock’s face is clouded with panic, one hand curled over his
abdomen. It happened so quickly, John still feels dizzy. Sherlock is right. This is not the time or place to fuck each other incoherent.

John briefly recalls the image of Sherlock bent over at the hips, face pushed into sofa cushions, legs spread and dark curls in John’s grip. Begging. Right there, if Reggie and his friend hadn’t interrupted he probably would have fucked him right there. Could have. The possibility was open. Or wait- on a bed. Sherlock deserves that.

“John, listen to me,” Sherlock says loudly. Urgently. It brings John out of his filthy reverie. He sounds surprisingly put together for an omega just going into pre-heat. John is a doctor, he knows exactly what is happening to Sherlock’s body right now. If Sherlock would just let John touch him, physical contact would speed up the process and instead of the usual hour it would take, Sherlock’s body would blossom into full heat and he’d be entirely ready for a knot-

“John for God’s sake!” Sherlock shouts, and throws a bit of hay at him. Some of it gets in his eye. Ow. “Go downstairs. There are emergency suppressants in the pocket of my coat, can you get them for me? Please?”

He’s not sure if Sherlock realises it’s not a very good idea to use that pleading tone on him because his lizard brain interprets it all the wrong ways, but this is Sherlock, a fucking genius, he’s smart and clever and a human being and John needs to be stronger than this, damn it. He nods, rushes towards the ladder. He can hear Sherlock release a low, painful moan as soon as he thinks John is out of sight, and it’s doing things to his head, the fact that Sherlock had to hold it in.

John’s feet feel heavy, and everything inside of him is telling him to go back, not away from Sherlock. Sherlock needs him, he’s in pain, and John would be so good, John would make him- God damn it. He almost violently grabs Sherlock’s coat, extracts the tiny blister pack and runs back towards the ladder. Climbs it and falls in a heap in front of Sherlock, holding out his hand, panting.

Sherlock grabs it, tears open the packaging and dry-swallows two pills. As soon as he does he throws the blister pack away and grabs John’s collar, pulls him towards himself and fits his nose into the crook of his neck.

“Sherlock, please don’t-“ John says weakly, his fingers still curling into Sherlock’s hair and keeping him there. He knows that if Sherlock was in full heat he wouldn’t have been able to hold him like this and not just throw him down, and. And. Fuck. John squeezes his eyes shut and tries to breathe through his mouth.

“I need to-“ Sherlock whispers, and curls closer towards John, nearly moulding his body to fit
against his side. They both huddle against the wall, John not trusting himself to move, at all. If he moves, if he touches Sherlock, he won’t be able to stop. Sherlock makes low whining noises and scrabbles at him, curls his fingers into the front of his jumper. “It helps. Touching you. Smelling you. Oh, God. It’s okay, I trust you.”

John takes a deep breath and holds him closer, tries not to think about anything else. Tries to not think about how often he fantasised about this, except in the fantasies Sherlock would be fully in heat and pulling John towards him for something a lot more… intense. Graphic. Involving far more bodily fluids.

He doesn’t know how long they stay there like that. John has to hold his breath every minute or so because the scent grows too overpowering, has to look anywhere else but at Sherlock trying to scent him, his long fingers cupping his thigh, rubbing. “You smell all wrong,” he keeps mumbling.

But it stops eventually. John can breathe normally again, the scent fades to something far more bearable. Sherlock rolls away from him and leans against the wall, mouth wide open, breathing hard. John turns towards him and watches as he lifts a trembling hand to wipe some sweat away from his forehead.

“You alright?” he asks, quietly.

Sherlock doesn’t respond at first, choosing instead to tilt his head and rest it against John’s shoulder. His chest still rises and falls quicker than normal, and John wants to curl his arm around him and pull him closer, but he’s a little out of his depth, here. He doesn’t know what kind of touch would be welcome and what wouldn’t, so he stays still.

“I’m sorry,” Sherlock murmurs. “I didn’t expect-“

“You don’t have to be sorry,” John says quickly, recognising the signs of one of Sherlock’s downward guilt spirals. He twists his head so his mouth is in Sherlock’s curls, and he kisses the top of his head. Sherlock’s body grows a little less rigid, but he still sounds distressed when he speaks.

“But I- I didn’t mean to put you in that position. In my experience, Alphas seldom… hold back, as you did. Granted, it wasn’t a full heat, but if you’d… if you hadn’t…”

John has an inkling of who might have given Sherlock that kind of experience, but he tries not to think about that. It always makes him feel ill, thinking about Sherlock that way. Defenceless.
Weakened. Unable to fight back. Sherlock’s hand is still clenched tightly around his knee, as if anchoring himself, and John inches his hand towards his, threads their fingers together.

“You never, ever have to worry about that,” he tells him, firmly. “Yeah, it wasn’t exactly easy, but don’t ever think that I won’t stop if you tell me to. Okay? I’d never do that to you. I don’t care if you’re in heat. You say no, I back off. Always.”

Sherlock lifts his head slowly and before John can say anything else he presses his lips softly to his.

“Thank you,” he murmurs against his mouth, as if that isn’t a ridiculous thing to say.

His skin is still warm. John can smell him so clearly; the overpowering scent of suppressants now gone, washed away by Sherlock’s sudden heat. Now it’s just him; rosewater and wildflowers, cinnamon. Gorgeous. He can taste it too; the slight saltiness of sweat, the sweetness of Sherlock’s mouth. John slides a hand into his hair and kisses him back, oh God, he smells heavenly, he has to control the urge to press his nose to his neck and scent him. Hasn’t kissed him since yesterday, and it feels like years.

“Hey,” he mumbles, his voice rough from the strain of holding back. “Don’t you have a case to solve, genius?”

“In a minute,” Sherlock says quietly, before pulling away and resting his head against the wall again. He leans against John; a steady, comforting weight against his side. “It seems that your proximity somehow triggered a heat,” he muses. “My last dose must have worn off today.”

John frowns. It’s a rare situation, but it happens sometimes. Usually between bonded couples, though. More often when the omega would be ovulating, their internal biology reminding them that the provider of genetic material was nearby and mating soon would be beneficial. John grimaces.

“Lucky you had those suppressants.”

“They’re not actually suppressants,” Sherlock mutters, sounding a tad irritated. “Reggie gave them to me, before. Yesterday. Lucky seems almost redundant. It’s as if the bastard knew.”

John frowns, ignoring Reggie’s part in providing Sherlock with drugs, and the shocking fact that he knew Sherlock’s secondary gender—before continuing, “If they’re not suppressants, what are they?”
Sherlock turns to look at him and tilts his head to one side. His cheeks are still tinged with the slightest hint of pink, his body still warmer than usual. Sweat makes the curls over his ear cling to his temples. “Heat inhibitors,” he informs him, matter-of-factly.

“Sherlock, those are-“ John swallows, concern and panic suddenly tightening in his gut. “Those are illegal.” Fuck Reggie for giving them to Sherlock, Jesus.

Sherlock arches an eyebrow, unperturbed. “HI’s are perfectly healthy, John. The only negative side effect is infertility, which is exactly why the NHS bans the sale and distribution so vehemently.”

“But-“

Sherlock rolls his eyes. “Yes, I’m sure you’re taught that they’re dangerous, cause tumours and the like. If you ask me, however, it’s just another means of controlling omega agency. Omegas are statistically more likely to die from a rape caused by an unforeseen heat than by overdosing on Heat Inhibitors. If our sexual cycle was within our control, the Alpha agenda certainly wouldn’t survive, would it?”

Sherlock sends him an amused smile that doesn’t reach his eyes. John flinches from the vitriol in his voice, but he can’t blame him. The number of accidents that could be prevented if an Omega could abort a heat by themselves would be… astronomical, honestly. Rape laws were lax enough anyway: a very small percentage of Alphas were actually prosecuted.

“You’re right,” he says, and Sherlock’s expression flickers for a second. Surprise. “I didn’t know. I’m sorry. It’s all over our course, you know, the use of illegal suppressants. It’s the worst possible thing an omega could dabble in. Disruption in the continuity of the species, all that.”

“Well,” Sherlock clears his throat, “In your defence, the NHS has hardly ever poured any money into Omega welfare, outside of pregnancy and sexual health. And they’re likely not to in future. So you’ll continue to be taught that even popping legal suppressants would lead to an early demise or barren womb, the latter being far more undesirable.”

John winces in sympathy. Sherlock is inarguably right; and there’s absolutely nothing either of them can do about it. Omega biology was always taught in a utilitarian way; how you could make the most out of it from the earliest age. John curses himself silently for never giving it that much thought until it was someone he cared about deeply that suffered for it.
“Fine. I mean. Just be careful, yeah? You sure it won’t make you sick or anything?”

“Possible nausea,” Sherlock assents, finally standing up, dusting hay off of himself. John follows suit. “I’d rather be sick over a toilet than burst into heat at an inopportune time. Besides. All it does is fight off the symptoms for a while and prevent pregnancy. I’ll be fine. Come on. We have a case to solve.”

It barely takes Sherlock a few minutes or two to morph back into his usual self, graceful and lithe. Prowling. Sleuthing, John’s head adds fondly.

***

Sherlock solves the case quickly after John points out that he’d missed the word *under* from the instruction list. John doesn’t think the case could be any more of a cliche, but there’s an underground cellar beneath the tree, which the three of them (since Reggie had found them near the tree and asked if he could help) have to climb down towards. Everything goes smoothly until Sherlock sprains his wrist while trying to move an enormous slab of wood by himself and Reggie promptly faints at the sight of Brunton’s corpse. He hits his head on something sharp on the ground, and soon enough the metallic tang of blood fills the room.

John immediately drops down to his knees and rolls him over onto his back. It affects him more strongly that it should; he needs to smoothen the ragged edges of panic upon seeing an injured omega; considering Reggie doesn’t block his scent like Sherlock does it’s practically a harsh pull; protect.

Sherlock’s eyes flash as they look at him, his nose tucked into his elbow in an attempt to not breathe in the scent of Burton’s body decomposing. “Oh for God’s sake, did he just faint?”

“Yeah,” John mutters, checking his pulse. “He’s bleeding out. I need to get him upstairs.”

Sherlock makes an irritated noise, looking between Reggie’s supine form and Brunton’s corpse. He’s disappointed, obviously; they knew what happened to Burton but why or how he’d got there, or Rachel’s role in his disappearance, was still a mystery.

He grabs his coat from where he’d shucked in on the ground before they’d moved the slab and throws it to John. “Use it to keep pressure on the wound, then. Go.”
John snatches it and presses it against his side of Reggie’s head; a gash stretches from his temple to his cheekbone; a smallish cut but bleeding profusely. It’ll probably need stitches. He hooks an arm under his knees and the other around his back and staggers to his feet. Sherlock scowls at the sight, and despite himself John smiles at him. Shit. Maybe he shouldn’t. They did just find a dead body.

“Either I was right and he and Burton had a romantic relationship at some point - which is the only acceptable reason for fainting at the sight of his corpse- or Reggie is an idiot who can’t handle a corpse.”

“You have to help me,” John tells him, ignoring his snark. “I can’t get him up by myself.”

Sherlock rolls his eyes but agrees to help, holding on to his ankles while John grabs him under his armpits. At least he’s not heavy, he thinks. Unlike Sherlock, Reggie isn’t built for a great deal of manual labour, whereas Sherlock hides a great deal of muscle under his slender frame. Probably why he’s heavier. Reggie’s head lolls to the side as they struggle to get him out of the cellar. Once outside, John has to lay him down on the grass and catch his breath.

“Should I-“ Sherlock starts but John waves him off.

“No, I’ll take him. I’ll be back. Be careful down there, okay?”

Sherlock scoffs. He half expects him to lean forward and kiss him, but it’s wishful thinking. “We could have solved this last bit together if this idiot here hadn’t dropped unconscious,” he mutters, before turning his back to John and climbing back downstairs.

John exhales between his teeth before picking Reggie up again. He’s used to this, of course. Sherlock wouldn’t waste time coming with him, obviously. And he couldn’t just wait for him to solve the case while Reggie continued to bleed out.

***

Reggie regains consciousness an hour or so later, eyes fluttering open and finding John. He’d told the staff to call a doctor, but apparently Reggie only went to one specific doctor and the man was out of town performing surgery somewhere, so the task of stitching Reggie’s wound closed fell to John.

“Welcome back,” John murmurs, wiping his hands of antiseptic. He looks down at himself; his shirt
is stained with Reggie’s blood. It smells much more awful than it should.


John sighs, handing him a glass of water. “Depends. What do you remember?”

He tries to sit up on the bed but John stops him. “You need to rest, trust me. You fainted in the underground cellar. I stitched up the cut on your head and you can take some painkillers for the headache, but you need to go to the doctor tomorrow so he can make sure you don’t have a concussion, alright?”

Reggie puts his mouth around the straw in the glass and sucks slowly before draining most of the glass. Panting, he hands the glass back to John. His face ashen and hollow, with a bandage around his head, not to mention tucked into bed, Reggie looks younger than he is, and quite a bit vulnerable. John runs a hand through his hair before sitting down on the edge of the bed.

“Burton’s dead, isn’t he,” Reggie tells him. His voice is blank.

“No,” John answers. There’s no point in dragging it out.

“I expected as much,” he replies, his eyes starting to flutter closed. “Tell Holmes that there wasn’t anything between us, I know he suspected it. And I’ll expect him to tell me everything tomorrow, I-“ he takes a shaky breath and John immediately gets up, pushes him gently back against the pillows, before dragging the duvet up to his chin.

“Just go to sleep, yeah? I asked someone from the staff to stay with you tonight. Is that alright?”

“Fine,” Reggie mumbles.

He drifts off in seconds, his chest rising and falling gently in the rhythm of exhausted sleep. John feels slightly jealous himself; he’s tired too. He suddenly wants to drag Sherlock up from that tomb-like hole in the ground and take him to bed, curl around him and go to sleep.

He stands up from his place on the bed, checks Reggie’s bandages once and his pulse (steady) before
moving over to turn off the lamp. He’ll be fine until the morning at least. And as far as John could tell from checking the basic signs, he didn’t have a concussion. The cut wouldn’t scar. All in all, a good result for someone who’d fainted at the sight of a corpse. Well. Not just a corpse for Reggie, at least.

Before he can, though, the door clicks open. John turns around, expecting someone from the staff to have come asking after Reggie, but it’s Sherlock; stepping into the room with his usual grace and leaving the door ajar behind him.

“Well,” he says, surveying Reggie on the bed. “Looks like he’ll live.”

Relief flood John’s body. He knew there wasn’t anything potentially dangerous down there, but leaving Sherlock alone in that dark cellar had been a matter of necessity, not choice. He immediately covers the distance between the two of them, runs his hand over his body, checking for any injuries. “You okay? What was it?”

Sherlock sighs, the rigid pose melting into something more languid under John’s searching hands. “I’m fine. Didn’t take long. I’ll tell you the rest tomorrow. I just-“ he stills John’s wandering hands with his fingers around his wrists, tugs him towards himself and tucks his head into the side of John’s neck. Scenting. John can feel him shiver against his body. He moves away just as quickly, silver, unreadable eyes flicking down his body; probably taking in his rumpled, bloodstained clothes. John returns the favour; Sherlock has dirt all over his.

“You were right, obviously. Buried treasure,” Sherlock murmurs, meeting his gaze. He cocks his head to the side and peers at Reggie’s sleeping form. “He’s going to be in for quite a surprise, come morning, I should think.”

John’s curiosity, alight at first, fades in favour of the need to thread his fingers to Sherlock’s hair, kiss the corner of his mouth.

“John-“ Sherlock whispers, fingers curling into John’s shirt, pulling him closer. “We should-“

“Yeah. Right,” Sherlock starts tugging him backwards, towards the door. “Someone will come for him, he’ll be fine.”

“Yes,” Sherlock agrees. “Do you want me to tell you about the case now, or-“
“Tomorrow, as you said,” John says, reaching behind Sherlock to push open the door. They manage to make it to the hallway, still clutching at each other. Sherlock would usually never miss an opportunity to impress John with his cleverness, and John had been pretty curious to know about Rachel’s fate; but Sherlock is pressing his body to his, mouth travelling to his ear, and most coherent thoughts fly out of his head when he does that.

“Haven’t touched you like this since yesterday,” John says, breathlessly.

“Well, I’m lifting the ban,” Sherlock answers.

They finally get to their room, separating for a second so that John can open the door, and they barely make it into the bedroom before Sherlock practically pounces on him again, grabbing him by his elbows and pushing him against the door, pinning him there with his hips. John only has time to cup a hand around the curve of his ribs before eager fingers slip under his shirt, slide over the skin above his waistline.

“God, the smell,” Sherlock complains, his voice almost a growl, his mouth against John’s ear. “You reek of Reggie’s pheromones, and you’ve got his blood on you, it’s been driving me mad.”

Heat pools in John’s gut. Sherlock is never quite so… aggressive, in his ministrations. There will be the occasional bossy tone, John will sometimes be pushed up against walls before Sherlock slides to his knees. But right now Sherlock’s fingers dig in hard enough to bruise, and there are teeth against the skin under his ear. John curls a finger into the collar of his shirt, brings him closer, close enough to scent. A growl continues to build in his throat, John can feel it vibrating under his lips.

He does smell like Reggie, it would be impossible not to. He’d carried the bloke to his bed and he’d bled all over him, and John didn’t really have time to change. He’d thought that it was a mild inconvenience to Sherlock, not something that would drive him to… well, this. John hasn’t touched him like this in what seems like far too long of a time, and desire burns down his body, fills him with the urge to grab and hold and push. Sherlock must feel the same, except in his over-zealous conquest of the skin under John’s shirt, he twists his wrist and with a hiss he pulls back.

Ah, the injury. John curses himself for not remembering sooner.

“Hey. Easy. Let me fix that first,” he says gently, trying to push Sherlock back with a hand at his chest.
Sherlock stands firm, tries to push through. “No, I want-“ the barest hint of a whine, and it makes John smile, because obviously Sherlock would still be running on adrenaline, still too wired to stop.

“Trust me, so do I, but your wrist is sprained. Come on,” John presses a kiss to the corner of his mouth before taking his hand and peeling them both away from the door, leading Sherlock to the enormous four poster and forcing him down with a hand on his shoulder. His bottom hits the mattress and he scowls mutinously at John.

“John, it’s putting me off, could you at least take off your shirt?”

“Nope,” he replies, popping the ‘p’. Sherlock groans frustratingly in response, as if John were only being tiresome and harassing him on purpose. He wishes he could tell Sherlock that he’d been half on edge since that bit in the stable, or that his arousal had already been simmering beneath the surface since Sherlock had climbed into his lap, naked, and asked John why he wasn’t just fucking him already.

Well, possibly the conversation had been a bit different, but still.

He makes his way towards the en-suite washroom, finds the first-aid kit he’d seen before, finds the crepe bandages.

By the time he comes back, Sherlock is struggling with the buttons of his shirt, trying to flick them open one-handed, the other one lying on his knee. John walks over to the bed and stills the movement with a hand, making Sherlock look up at him from the bed, wide eyed.

“You don’t have to take off your shirt,” John tells him, but it doesn’t stop him from unbuttoning the rest, trailing his fingers over pale skin as he does so. John only has so much self-control to spare, especially when Sherlock’s cheeks flush with his touch. He rolls his shoulders so the shirt falls off, and he holds out his injured wrist expectantly.

John swallows, tries not to let his eyes linger too much on bare skin. “I feel like fifty percent of our relationship is me patching you up after a case,” he says shakily. Sherlock arches an eyebrow at him, his mouth an amused tilt.

“What’s the other fifty percent?” he asks, in an innocent voice. Tension sparks between the two of them. John could cut through it. Sherlock sits there with his knees spread and his chest bare, John’s fingers tremble while he wraps the bandage around his wrist. He decides to sit next to him on the bed.
and pull Sherlock’s wrist towards his lap instead, considering the fact that Sherlock looking up at him from underneath his lashes was doing odd things to his head.

“You injuring yourself, obviously,” John snorts.

Sherlock huffs out a laugh and they’re silent for a few more moments. John is gentle with his fingers, even so Sherlock winces a bit. John fleetingly thinks of how Sherlock’s hands are like the rest of him; fine-boned, delicate. Porcelain skin, so easy to mark. His grip is strong though, John would know; Sherlock’s slender frame hides a great deal of wiry strength. Always so contradictory, built of so many extremes, pulling and pushing every which way. Track marks still mar his lovely skin, some of them fading, some of them still darker than others. Sherlock catches the pull of his gaze towards the bruises and shifts uncomfortably.

“It was you, you know.”

John looks up at him questioningly, finds Sherlock’s silver eyes staring back at him. His tongue darts out to lick at his bottom lip. Nervousness. John frowns.

“The case,” he clarifies. “You,” he swallows. “I couldn’t have solved it without you.”

John’s fingers pause in their movement, and his throat tightens uncomfortably. Sherlock couldn’t have possibly known what was going on his head throughout the entire day, because John had hid it well. Or could he? Mind reading wasn’t much of a leap when considering Sherlock’s considerable set of skills.

“What, with the massage and the not-buggering-you in an empty stable?”

Sherlock visibly flinches and damn it, John didn’t mean for it to come out like that. He sighs, shaking his head. “Sorry, sorry, I didn’t-“

“Oh,” Sherlock whispers, an almost silent sound of realisation. “You really don’t see, do you?”

John frowns at him. “See what?”
Sherlock’s mouth pulls into a surprised little smile, as if John is being so oblivious. He uses his uninjured hand wrap around his forearm, holds him tightly. “How can you be so blind as to your own value to me?”

John’s lips part. “Sherlock, I-“

Before he can continue Sherlock cups his hand around John’s mouth, stopping him from speaking. “Shut up, you idiot. Listen to me. You don’t know how important you are to me. You don’t know what it’s like, the inside of my head. Most of the time it’s chaos. But the moment I see you, it stops. Do you understand? You do it just by existing.”

John’s breath catches at the sincerity in his voice. Sherlock is usually not the one to make heartfelt admissions. John is the one who can’t contain his feelings, the one whose words tumble out at the most inopportune of moments. John breathes against Sherlock’s skin, his lips against his palm, and he feels awful. Sherlock was just being Sherlock, being his clever, amazing self and John was being an idiot.

Sherlock must see something in his eyes because his hand falls away and is replaced instead with his lips. The kiss is soft, sweet, unlike the animalistic meeting of their mouths against the door. John kisses him back, cradles Sherlock’s face in his hands and prises open his lips, lets his tongue sweep inside. “You’re a right soppy bastard,” he says, and Sherlock laughs against his mouth.

John doesn’t know how it happens, or what prompts it, but the thought suddenly crawls into his brain that there is nothing, nothing he wouldn’t do to keep Sherlock laughing like that.

How could he have been so stupid as to let doubt colour his mind?

“Only sometimes,” Sherlock replies. He places a hand over his chest, curls his fingers over John’s shoulder and the heat of his touch is torture, it leaves a burning trail and John is suddenly very aware of Sherlock’s half-naked state. There’s a bit of dirt against his cheek, John swipes it away with his thumb, he presses kisses to the edge of his jaw. Sherlock shivers when John’s hands slide downwards, curve over the swell of his ribs.

Sherlock’s body feels frail under his hands, and as always, protectiveness curls around his stomach, his chest.

“I spiral so often,” Sherlock says quietly, wonderingly. John pulls back to look at him, and
Sherlock’s cheeks are pink, his eyes bright. “But you’re always there. And yes, perhaps not fucking me in the stable was very helpful of you, but that’s hardly one of your highest achievements.”

John cracks a smile at that. “God, I love it when you’re generous with your compliments.”

“You should be grateful I am being generous at all,” Sherlock points out, his face inching closer. He brushes his lips teasingly over John’s, and his hands move to the buttons of his shirt. He starts flicking them open, one by one. John swallows. “Considering you simply refuse to take this offending garment off, faff about smelling like someone else. Didn’t I tell you it was distracting me?” He rips open the last with a great deal of unnecessary force, John can hear the button ricochet somewhere.

“Couldn’t tell,” he jokes breathlessly. Sherlock runs his hands over his abdomen, over his chest, cups them behind his neck.

The change in his body is almost instantaneous, one moment Sherlock is soft and shy, making emotional admissions, and the other moment he’s attacking John’s mouth with his own. The wet press of his tongue, the slice of his teeth. It’s not as though John minds, though. He’s used to Sherlock being akin to a storm; unpredictable, untameable, undeniably gorgeous.

“I would very much like for you to take me to bed,” Sherlock says, punctuating each word with a kiss against his lips. John’s cock, at half mast so far, twitches in response to Sherlock’s words. Blood rushes in his ears.

“Uh-“ he says inelegantly, allowing Sherlock to push his shirt off his shoulders.

“I did promise a rain check,” he reminds him, and a long fingered hand moves to his lap, palms his erection. John’s breath hitches.

“You-“

“Hm, yes. Want you. To fuck me.”

Damn it, damn it. John could spontaneously combust. He’d imagined shagging Sherlock countless times, usually the fantasies were tame in terms of location; Sherlock’s sofa, his bedroom, John’s rickety bed back at his flat.
He didn’t think he’d do it for the first time in an ancient manor house in Sussex, the both of them covered in grime and sweat, and in Sherlock’s case, the vestiges of an aborted heat still clinging to his skin.

Sherlock mistakes the pause in his movements for hesitation, and he pulls away slightly, frowning. “I’m clean,” he promises. “I was tested the last time I used, you were there, you saw. And Mycroft had your medical records pulled ages ago, you’re absolutely spotless. But if you-“

John silences his doubt with his mouth, kisses him hard and fast, kisses him so deeply Sherlock starts panting against his mouth. It’s so easy to push him down, they both tumble into the mattress in a tangle of limbs. Sherlock’s lips easily find his again, his arms wrap around John’s shoulders.

“God, you’re beautiful,” John whispers against his lips, as his fingers move to the zipper of his jeans, pulls it down, slips it off along with his pants, down Sherlock’s boyishly narrow hips. Sherlock angles his head upwards, parts his lips in a silent request for the press of John’s mouth again, and he obliges, kisses him until Sherlock is breathless with the urgency of it. John feathers a touch along his small cock, and it twitches in his hand, leaking.

John finds Sherlock attractive all the time, but he is beautiful like this, his body taunt and quivering under his hands, the way his back curves into an arch so that it’s all one long, sinewy line, pale skin flushed with the pink of his arousal; the pale, untouched territory of his throat, so inviting. John cups his hands around his hips, pulls him roughly towards himself, and Sherlock immediately wraps his coltish legs around his waist. John bends down to kiss him again, because how can he not, when his lips are pink and perfect and so goddamn irresistible.

“We can- do it here?” he pants against his mouth, and John pauses. He lifts himself up a bit, supporting himself on his palms, frowns down at Sherlock, concern creeping in.

“Do you- do you want to do it somewhere else?” he asks, uncertainly, feeling a little ridiculous. Unless Sherlock thinks shagging in Reggie’s guest bedroom is rude, which he supposes is a valid consideration.

Sherlock’s expression is oddly unreadable. He swallows and his eyes skitter around the room before resting on something in the corner; John follows his gaze and finds a desk. Old, ornate, expensive wood.

“Um,” he doesn’t want to make Sherlock feel uncomfortable if he really wants to get shagged over a
desk, (and John obviously wouldn’t mind) but surely not the first time..? “I mean, I can see the appeal, love, but do you really want to-“

“No,” Sherlock says quickly, loudly. John’s gaze snaps back at him, and there is something off about Sherlock’s tone. He fits himself more securely around John, his legs tighten where they’re wrapped around John’s waist. “Like this. Please. On my back. I’ve never-“

He pales, and his eyes flash with something that John can’t read. Mouth clamps shut with a click.

“Sherlock?” John cups a hand over his cheek, rubs a thumb over the ridge of his cheekbone. The concern intensifies, becomes something very urgent.

Sherlock shakes his head, can’t meet his gaze. “Before- before you, that is. I’ve only ever- only ever done it in. Other ways. Never like this.”

John doesn’t even need, or want, to ask what “other ways” is. If Sherlock puts it into words, if he tells John that he’s only ever been fucked over tables, or that he’s never known what it’s like to look at someone when he’s being taken, John isn’t sure he’ll be able to control himself. He shuts his eyes, takes a deep breath. When he opens them, Sherlock is staring up at him wide-eyed, hesitant. John leans down and presses a kiss, feather light, against his mouth.

“Do you know what I want to do, right now?” he asks, casually.

Sherlock cocks his head, a small smile at the corner of his mouth. “I’m hoping you’ll say you want to have sex with me.”

“Close, but not quite,” John continues his trail of kisses down his chin, over his jaw, until he can whisper the next words into his ear. “I want to spoil you absolutely rotten. Will you let me?”

John is rewarded with a full body shiver and the upward thrust of Sherlock’s hips, a delicious pressure against his cock. “Oh,” he whispers, blush stealing high into his cheeks and his mouth a perfect shape of surprise. “That sounds…” a skittering swallow, “good.”

And God, John feels so furious for a moment, because Sherlock is always so surprised at moments like this, as if his enjoyment being secondary was always a matter of course. And why should it? The question baffles John all the time. Making Sherlock come undone, listening to the sounds he makes
when John touches him in all the right ways- it’s addictive, it’s fucking spectacular. John could bring him over to the edge and over as many times as possible and never get tired, could suck him down and make him feel fantastic and all he’d want would be the privilege of doing it again. The fact that there were people in the world who could have treated Sherlock’s body like a receptacle and nothing more and Sherlock had thought that he deserved it, that it was the price of friendship- God. He has to press his nose to the side of his neck and inhale the comforting scent of his skin before he feels calmer.

Omega scent receptors, damped down with suppressants before and now emitting the natural sweetness of his fragrance, John will miss this when Sherlock has to hide it again.

“I was hoping it would be better than good, but we’ll get there,” John finally answers, fingers sliding over the damp skin of his quivering abdomen before wrapping around his cock. It fits perfectly into his hand, and Sherlock’s hips immediately start making little shivered thrusts, fucking into the channel of his fingers.

There is only one lamp in the room that’s switched on, soft yellow light illuminating the room and throwing pools of light and shadow on Sherlock’s face; throwing his cheekbones and the hollows under his eyes into relief. He looks like a fucking renaissance painting, John could stare at him for hours.

“Should we switch off the lights?” Sherlock asks, voice uncertain, and John shakes his head before lowering his lips to catch the shell of his ear in his mouth.

“What’s the point if I can’t see you?” he asks, and Sherlock makes a soft gasp of arousal, God that’s sexy. Hands trail down, down his cock, till he can press two fingers against the damp, hot place between his cheeks. Sherlock makes a whimpering noise and bears down, and when John presses in, wetness gushes around his fingers. Sherlock’s scent clouds the room; heady and absolutely addictive.

His heels dig into his back, fingers moves up his shoulders and Sherlock’s arms wrap around his neck, pull him closer. Sherlock is tight; he clenches around John’s fingers and utters a ragged moan when John twists and pulls out before repeating the motion.

“John, God, that’s-” words fail him and he just throws his head back, neck a perfect arch, lips parted and exhaling short, shallow breaths. Sherlock has a way of saying his name that gets him hard in seconds; such a normal, ordinary name and Sherlock says it as though it’s special, like a supplication.

John finds a rhythm and fingers him open with quick, deep movements, a rhythm that is just on the side of too rough but Sherlock’s natural lubricant is dripping in a steady stream over his fingers and
down his wrist. He cups the back of his head and pulls John’s follicles every few seconds; the pain sharpens his focus, trust Sherlock to keep him on his toes even when he’s spread wide and begging.

His wrist is sore and the angle is awkward but John wants to see him, needs to see him, needs to see the way the flush spreads from his cheeks, down his neck, over his chest. Needs to bend his head down and take the rosy bud of a nipple into his mouth, suck until Sherlock’s cock is making a mess over his stomach and his moans of “John” turn into half-bitten vowels.

His own arousal presses insistently against his jeans, a torturous kind of reminder. John has to unzip himself and release his cock, shuck his jeans off hurriedly, and the moment he does so Sherlock tries to sit up, tries to wrap a hand around him.

John is quick; pins Sherlock’s wrist against the bed in a fluid movement. Sherlock looks up at him, eyes wide and mouth open, panting. “John, let me-“

“I’m going to set some ground rules, and you’re going to listen,” he says. “There’s just one. You’re going to lie down there and take what I give you, and you’re going to enjoy it. I promise. Deal?”

Sherlock doesn’t speak, only nods slowly, his cock twitching and his hole clenching around John. He squirms under his touch, especially when John finds that spot inside of him that makes him whine and keen.

“John, please,” he murmurs. “God, please, just-“

John smirks, keeps sliding his fingers in and out, until Sherlock’s hips tremble in a very telling way. He uses his free hand to swipe back some damp curls from his face. “Tell me what you want,” he whispers.

Sherlock wraps a hand around his nape and pulls him closer, smears his mouth against John’s. “Want to come with you inside me.”

Simple words, spoken in Sherlock’s matter-of-fact voice, but they call out to something almost primal inside of him; unnamed but undeniably present. The urge to flip him over and just take him like that burns inside of him but John tamps it down. Not like that. Not now. Later, definitely.

He slips his fingers out instead and Sherlock whines a bit, hips shivering against empty space. John
kisses the crest of a cheekbone, being gentle again takes a few seconds of self-control, a few seconds of inhaling Sherlock’s fragrance. “Okay,” he whispers. “Okay. Come here.”

Cups his hands around Sherlock’s sharp hipbones, drags him across the mattress and tilts his hips upward so that the angle is more efficient, Sherlock’s hole right against the tip of John’s cock. He can feel his thighs tighten where they’re hooked around his ribs.

“Yeah?” John asks, voice a hushed whisper, hips trembling with restraint. He meets Sherlock’s gaze, multi coloured and fathomless in the dim light of the room. Beautiful, precious, dangerous as fuck; the man is a force of nature.

“Yes, yes, John, please-“

John steals the words out of his mouth by pushing in slowly. Sherlock stills mid-sentence, mouth open around an exhale. His hand swipes up, over the curve of his neck and into John’s hair, another curls around John bicep so tightly that it’ll probably bruise.

“Oh,” Sherlock whispers, eyes wide as they meet John’s gaze. Surprised as if the sensation is something he hadn’t expected, John could kiss him senseless. “I- oh, God-“

And fuck, he’s tight. Sherlock clenches around him, pulling him in as though his body wants nothing more than John’s cock, his hips bearing down in abortive little thrusts until John is buried till the hilt. Sherlock shivers, his breath strained and ragged, sweat shines along his sternum, his chest. John bends down and kisses him softly, lets his body adjust to the size. Sherlock isn’t in heat and as such his muscles would take longer to relax around him, and pushing in too quickly would probably injure him. He strokes a finger down his cheek. Sherlock’s eyes flutter closed and his breaths start slowing down.

“You alright? Does it hurt?” John asks.

“Yes, I mean- no“ Sherlock bites his lip as his eyes squeeze shut again, and John can feel a gush of lubricant around his cock. “I’m alright, I want-“

Sherlock is trembling. John runs his palms over his torso, trying to soothe with touch. “How do you want it, hmm?”

Arms curve over the crest of his shoulders, Sherlock tilts his face towards John for a kiss. John presses his mouth against him, kisses him softly. “Slowly,” Sherlock says, and he sounds so hesitant,
as if John would ever dream of denying him that. “I know I said, before, that I liked it a certain way, but, I want-” he stammers, and John just smiles, kissing him down his chin and sucking a bruise on to the edge of his jaw.

“What’s the rush,” John teases, and pulls out, slowly, before pushing in again, watching Sherlock’s face morph from uncertainty to something akin to bliss. Eyes closed, cheeks flushed. “God, look at you.”

Sherlock’s eyes snap open and they regard him, almost quizzically. John hands travel down the curve of his ribs, hold him firmly by the hips and against him, keeps him there while he thrusts in, slow and deep.

“Why do you always say that?”

John raises an eyebrow back. “Say what? That you’re bloody gorgeous and I could come just from looking at you?”

Sherlock’s response is a low whimper that seems to come out of his mouth by itself and a tightening of his legs around John’s waist. John bends down to kiss and suck at his throat, because god, it’s a work of art, and the shape of John’s mouth would look so good there. His cock slides in and out of delicious warmth, hot and wet, the glide of Sherlock’s skin against his torturous. Slow is good, John keeps reminding himself.

“Yes,” he whispers. “Yes, that.”

John creeps a hand up and pinches a nipple, bit more rougher than he intended. Sherlock utters a choked off gasp. He whispers his words into Sherlock’s ear. “Do you like it? Do you want me to stop? Stop telling you fucking beautiful you are? Don’t think I’d manage.”

Sherlock hands slide down his back, fingers digging into the skin. “No, it’s- fine. Keep going.” John pulls out again completely before driving back inside in one quick thrust, not quite slow, but Sherlock’s answering mewl is encouragement enough.

“Slow,” Sherlock whispers. “But, more, I want-“

John reads the rest of the sentence even though it melts off into a moan when he pushes in, deep as
he can go, a hard thrust that drags Sherlock’s body across the mattress, makes the bedsheets pull and twist under his skin. Again. Again. John has to wrap a hand around the headboard for leverage. His hips roll, snap and thrust- fuck, it’s more difficult than he could have imagined to keep from just shoving in quick and fast.

He can feel Sherlock’s toes curling where they’re digging into his back, can hear the steady thump of the headboard against the wall. Sherlock looks up at him, gasps each time his cock hits that spot inside of him, eyes wide as if unable to quite believe what he’s feeling.

“John, I- I’m close,” he whispers, like a secret, and John nuzzles his throat, scents him where the smell is strongest. Something tart, when he licks the skin it bursts on his tongue, makes him see stars.

“God, you’re so wet,” he says, and his voice is rough. Sherlock quivers underneath him, John can hear his short gasps of breath, can tell that his orgasm is building from the tautness of his hips. Instinct makes his cock drive in a little faster, sharp thrusts that make little ‘ah, ah, ah’s spill from Sherlock’s mouth.

He pulls Sherlock’s arms down from his back, threads their fingers together instead, pins them on either side of Sherlock’s head. His curls spread out beneath him, hair beginning to frizz just a bit from sweat. Gorgeous. John kisses him, not as practiced as he would have liked, more like a meeting of their tongues than anything else.

“Talk to me,” he says against his mouth. “Tell me how it feels.”

Sherlock utters a shaky breath, the gaps of his fingers damp between John’s. “Full,” he whispers, eyes closed, black smudges against the tops of his cheekbones. “Tight. And… ah, perfect. Good. I’m so close, John.”

John sucks his bottom lip into his mouth. “Yeah? Show me.”

“John, please, I-“

“What do you need, hmm?”

“Faster,” Sherlock says quickly. “faster, please-“
John obeys without a second thought. Their fingers wound tightly together, his hips snap. Quick thrusts, his gaze finds the point of their connection and he almost comes right there, looking at his cock slide in and out of Sherlock in that rhythm. Hard and fast, Sherlock drips around him and his cock is so hard it lies flat against his abdomen.

“John, John-”

John looks down at him, his gaze fever-bright and dark at the same time, mouth a permanent ‘oh’ of pleasure. John has never seen anyone more beautiful, anyone more worthy of protection.

God, he’s in love with him. The realisation doesn’t even terrify him like it should- it’s obvious. He loves him. Loves him so much. There isn’t even any point in hiding from it or denying it. John would do anything for him, wants nothing more than for him to be happy and safe and out there in the world doing what he does best, being clever, being brilliant.

Fuck, fuck. Pleasure builds, his balls tighten and he slams into Sherlock. Sherlock’s moans being edged with the slightest hint of being overwhelmed. John twists his fingers out of Sherlock’s grasp, fits his hand against his jaw, forces him to look up at him. They look at each other and it’s incandescent.

“Gorgeous,” he says, simply, because he is, and Sherlock grows rigid, his arms flailing until they fit around John’s shoulders, tighten.

“John, John, I’m-fuck,” words tumble into helpless sounds, Sherlock’s back arches and there’s a stream of wetness around his cock, Sherlock’s come spurting onto his stomach. He keeps his eyes open, wide and dark as they look at John, lips bruised red from his the press of his own teeth.

Sherlock’s orgasm goes on for what seems like forever, his body still shaking even when John fucks into his pliant body, chasing his own release. He grows absolutely limp, John has to cup his hand under his knees to keep him in that position.

“Yes, yes,” Sherlock encourages him, sounding absolutely gone. He swipes his hands around John’s face, thumbs resting on his cheekbones, fingers cradling the back of his head. “Come inside me, John, please, I want it.”

“Yeah, yeah, okay,” John fits their foreheads together and he pushes Sherlock’s legs down, knees
against his chest and then spread them wide, open and vulnerable. “Going to-“

John doesn’t finish the rest of his sentence, ejaculates inside him, shuddering. His pleasure is tight and arching. His hips press into the soft flesh of Sherlock’s arse and his hands dig bruises into his hipbones. Endless orgasm, just like Sherlock’s. He fleetingly thinks of the fact of his semen sweeping inside Sherlock and the knowledge makes the Alpha part of him preen and purr. There is something primitive and instinctual about filling Sherlock up in the basest of ways.

He’s vaguely aware of his body giving way to exhaustion, collapsing in a heavy heap on top of Sherlock, who gives a slight grunt of disapproval. It turns into a pleased sound, however, when John knocks their lips together, a wet kiss, before slipping out of him slowly. Lubricant and semen leak out of his hole, John swallows, hard. Sherlock makes a soft noise, his back arching slightly at the movement.

John rolls off of him, panting hard, and Sherlock slides over to him, clings to his side, limpet like. John pulls him closer towards himself, so he sprawls on top of his chest, his head tucked underneath his chin and his arm hanging over his waist. John kisses the top of his head and Sherlock hums, lets John run his fingers down his damp back.

Silence, for a few long moments. John decides not to break it, not until Sherlock feels comfortable enough to talk. He settles for alternating between stroking his hair and his back, pressing kisses into his hair every few seconds.

“You okay?” he finally asks.

Sherlock stretches against him, long limbs tightening and then releasing. He shifts so that they’re lying side by side and he can look at John. His eyes shine in the half light. “Very much,” he answers softly. Slender fingers run down his chest, settle over his heart. “That was… different. Good,” he quickly adds, probably noticing John’s worried expression. “Although good is a very inadequate word. What I mean to say is, it’s never been like that before. And this time, I…”

John takes a deep breath, heart aching. He catches his wrist in his hand and presses his mouth to his palm. “Very coherent of you,” he says, teasing. Sherlock smiles back at him, the familiar amused tilt of his mouth that John has grown to love so much.

He fits against his side again, and John knows that he has to clean the both of them up, maybe get rid of these sheets before someone comes in, come morning. Sherlock is too shagged out to worry about Reggie’s reaction upon seeing the state of the bed tomorrow, but in all probability, he’ll only be too glad to overwhelm his sensibilities.
Instead he lets Sherlock burrow deeper against him, cups the back of his head protectively. It could be the hormones released during the pair bonding process, most potent in Alpha/Omega relationships, but John feels he couldn’t let go of Sherlock even if he wanted to. He needs the physical closeness, needs to feel him breathe next to him, physical evidence of his being safe. Protective tendencies, intense and undeniable, sharpening to an almost territorial edge. He knows that if someone were to interrupt them, he would probably go a bit feral.

He thinks that Sherlock is asleep, so he quietly reaches out a hand and switches off the lamp. The room goes dark. He shifts back into position, hoping he hasn’t woken him up.

“I didn’t think you’d stop, today,” Sherlock rumbles, and John startles. He looks down and Sherlock tilts his face up to look at him.

It takes John a few seconds to realise what he’s talking about. “Of course I stopped. You didn’t want it. Sherlock, I never want to do anything to you that you don’t want. That’s not something I would ever enjoy. You come first. Always.”

Sherlock stares at him for a few seconds before replying. “When I Presented for the first time,” he says slowly, watching hesitantly for John’s reaction. John keeps perfectly still. Sherlock doesn’t reveal much easily, and when he does, it’s always important. “Victor didn’t- you know. He would have, if his sister hadn’t dragged him away. It frightened me. If he had tried to mate with me, I would have allowed him. I would have enjoyed it, in all probability. But afterwards, when it was over, I felt so…I felt sick. That it was so easy for me to let biology take its course.”

John swallows past the rage in his throat, threads his fingers through Sherlock’s hair. “It wouldn’t have been your fault. It’s not something you can control.”

“I know. I knew then, as well. But after that, I’d never… I’d never wanted anyone to see me that way. After I Presented, Victor never really saw me the same way. How could I let anyone fuck me through a heat? How could I? I would be far too vulnerable, unable to ask for what I wanted. But it was also lonely. I wanted someone, so much. I would keep thinking that it would be easier. And the last time, when- when we hadn’t met for months, God, it was awful. I wanted you so badly. It’s all I wanted.”

Sherlock crawls up his body, tugs at John so they’re both on their sides. He kisses him, fiercely. His mouth hot and wet and demanding. “I want it, with you. I want to spend a Heat with you.”
John’s spent cock twitches. God. “Are you sure?” he asks, his voice suddenly rough and desperate. The very thought of being allowed to see him through a heat, of Sherlock asking him for it, it makes his gut tighten in anticipation. “We don’t-“

“The HI’s won’t hold it off for long. My cycle is irregular because of my continued use of suppressants, but I believe it’ll be soon, when the Inhibitors wear off.” Sherlock ducks his head, presses his nose to John’s neck and inhales deeply. “Would you?” his tone grows weary. “You don’t have to, obviously-“

John holds him close, wraps his arms around his waist, kisses the top of an ear. “Sherlock, never in my life have I wanted to do something so badly. Of course I agree. Of course I do. You think I’d ever say no to you? Christ, it’s impossible.”

Sherlock snuffles into his skin, contentment curling off from his body. Fierce emotion builds in John’s chest, threatens to spill out of his mouth in words, so he presses his mouth to Sherlock’s hair and tries not to say anything that would ruin what they have. He holds him, as close as possible, hoping that his touch might just convey just how far gone John is.

Exhaustion finds them both soon and pulls them under.

***

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