## Through a Fairytale, Darkly

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### Through a Fairytale, Darkly

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

**Summary**

Once upon a time, there was a Consulting Detective, a Pathologist, and a Consulting Criminal. One day, the Madman decided he wanted to play a new game. This is the result. Winner of the "Best Angst" and "Best Hurt/Comfort" Rated M categories in the 2013 Sherlock and Molly Fanfiction Awards (SAMFAs).

**Notes**

If you dislike darkfic, don't read this one because once it gets going, it won't stop for quite a while. The BBC and Mofftiss own Sherlock. I'm only borrowing them for personal enjoyment with no claim of ownership or receipt of payment.

I don't know why I have a... kink, I suppose is the right word? For Moriarty manipulating Sherlock and Molly, but I do. No character death, and no *severe* permanent damage, but that's all I can safely say.
Once upon a time, Jim Moriarty was undefeated and unknown. Until he met Sherlock Holmes. And the man had evaded death just as he had, to go on fighting another day.

Naturally, Jim Moriarty had to fix that.

It was so easy. Too easy. Of course, Sherlock hadn’t known Moriarty was still alive. If he had, he surely would’ve taken some semblance of precautions. Or would he? After all, the great detective had been too foolish to do it last time. *Fool you twice, Sherlock.*

So yes. In the end, kidnapping the Great Detective and the Lovelorn Pathologist had been easy.

Of course he’d taken Molly Hooper. Who was he going to take: John Watson? No. That was too cliché, too ordinary. Plus there was the little matter that Molly Hooper had helped save Sherlock’s life. She, an Ordinary Plus person at best, had helped to outsmart Jim Moriarty.

Well, he just couldn’t let that go unanswered and unpunished, could he?

No.

So there they were, drugged, unconscious, lying together on a bed in the room that was going to be their new home for… oh, however long he felt like playing with these little dolls.

The room had one window. At the very top near the ceiling. Barred, trapped. He wondered if Sherlock would be stupid enough to try and get up the fifteen feet to it. Probably not. But it was ready for him if he did.

The window wasn’t there out of the goodness of Moriarty’s heart. It was there for them to calculate the passage of time: to know they’d been there for days, weeks, months. It was to create despair.

But be fair, now: he had given them a huge, lovely room. Two wardrobes filled with clothing. Sofa, recliner, rocking chair, table and two chairs, desk and a sumptuous kind-sized bed. A bookshelf, violin for Sherlock and mini-piano for Molly. The bath had a shower, garden tub and a mirror that Moriarty couldn’t wait for Sherlock to try to break plus the basic toiletries. Small door like a pet door for giving them food and drinks and whatever else he wanted them to have. Or to make them take. It was like the perfect hotel room. Hotel California, that is.

CCTV cameras installed and ready, sound system ready, welcome note ready.

Moriarty grinned in delight. It was going to be sooo fun!

Once upon a time, Sherlock Holmes had been able to get the better of anyone who tried to pull something over on him.

That was before he’d met Jim Moriarty.

As a result, he now found himself waking up in a slow fog on a bed in an unfamiliar room.

He struggled to clear his mind, but couldn’t. Couldn’t open his eyes, even. The drugs were still too strong in his system. He was, however, also aware that he wasn’t alone. A soft, warm body was pressed close to him. He drew a deep breath.
His last thought before he sank back into darkness was that it was definitely not good.

When he awoke again, the first thing he saw was Molly sitting with knees drawn up on the bed, watching him. She smiled in relief. “I was worried.”

“How~” he began, coughed, sat up and tried again. “How long since~”

“Since I’ve been awake and you haven’t? About ten minutes, I’d say.”

“You’d say?”

She shrugged. “Nothing to tell time with.”

He looked around the room, then shakily got up and went into the lavatory, closing the door behind him. Not much later he came out and walked to the desk.

A note sat on it, addressed to The Happy Couple.

Molly had moved off the bed and was looking around, but when she saw him take the note she moved beside him. Sherlock opened it and they both read.

Dear Sherlock and Molly,

By now, Sherlock has figured out what’s going on. He’ll catch you up, Molly, so keep reading.

The rules are simple while you are guests here at Chateau du Bel Age. Behave. Don’t try to escape. Do what you’re told, when you’re told. Although… that might cause you both to break the “behave” rule. And that’s all right. I’ve got so many ways to make you do what I want. So very many ways.

For now, explore your new home, suite home. Refreshments will be served soon. I expect both of you to eat, drink and be… unhappy. I’ll pop round tonight and visit you.

Your Courteous Host,

JM.

Sherlock put the note in his trouser pocket. Molly paled.

“Oh, God. How did he survive, Sherlock?”

“I don’t know. But maybe he’ll be nice enough to explain it later. For now let’s have a look around, shall we?”

Once upon a time, Molly Hooper had thought nothing could be more wonderful than having Sherlock to herself to spend time with.

How very wrong she’d been.

After examining everything, he’d tried to break the mirror and gotten a severe electric shock.

“I warned you,” Moriarty had taunted.

Sherlock had tried to engage him in conversation, but it didn’t happen. Other than Moriarty warning
him that if he thought he’d do himself harm to be let out, he’d be dying and leaving Molly ALL ALONE, and did he want that on his conscience?

Now a tray had arrived through the hatch with hot tea, cold water, scones, fresh fruit and cheese. Sherlock took it to the table and they ate and drank, though Sherlock ate very little.

“Now what?” Molly asked.

“I need to think.”

And with that, he moved to the rocking chair, pressed his hands together, and stayed that way for several hours.

Molly passed the time reading a book, because she didn’t know what else to do.

Sherlock came out of his mind palace when he heard a noise at the small swinging door.

Molly rose from the chair and they both ran over to the door. By the time they got to it, there was no one to be seen. Only a silver tray containing two pairs of handcuffs and a note.

*I’ll be up to see you in a bit. I love reunions! And nothing makes for a sweet embrace like handcuffs, so snap, snap.*

Sherlock narrowed his eyes. Molly frowned.

“What does he mean?”

He sighed. “Do you need the lavatory?”

She stared. “What? No, not right now…”

“Well I do. Take these and go stand in the middle of the room.”

“What?!"

“Molly, which part of that was unclear?”

“The part where you explain why you asked me to do it?” Molly snapped.

He didn’t answer, just walked into the loo and shut the door.

Molly did as he asked, confused and a bit scared. She knew it was a part of some game, but trying to figure out what just made her feel ill so she stopped.

Sherlock came out and walked over to her. Without explanation or preamble, he took one pair of the handcuffs and closed one cuff around Molly’s left wrist.

Molly stared, fighting down panic. “Sherlock, what are you doing?”

“Preparing to receive a visitor,” he said, snapping the other one on her right wrist.

“I don’t…” Molly began, but the words died in her throat as Sherlock deftly raised her cuffed arms up and slipped beneath them so that she was embracing him.

“A sweet embrace,” Molly said hollowly, feeling scared and sick.

“Well done, though it took you a bit,” Sherlock said dryly, putting his arms around Molly and
looking over her shoulder to fasten the other handcuffs around his own wrists. He felt her shaking and frowned.

“He’s not here to kill us, Molly, or he wouldn’t have done this.”

“That’s so comforting, Sherlock,” Molly snapped.

There was a long pause between them while they absorbed the sensations of their position: Sherlock deducing new things about Molly and Molly trying not to panic.

The sound of the room door opening brought both of these things to a halt.
There was a Consulting Detective, a Pathologist, and a Consulting Criminal. The detective was the Virgin, the pathologist was the One Who Counted, and the criminal was the madman.

Chapter Summary

Moriarty makes his intentions known, and Sherlock and Molly prepare for their first night as his prisoners.

Once upon a time, Jim Moriarty had been searching for distractions.

Then he'd encountered Sherlock Holmes.

His best distraction ever. Even more so now, because he hadn't beaten him at all! He'd faked his death, too. Now he and Sherlock and Mousy Molly Hooper were going to be able to have some real fun.

He couldn't contain his grin as he sauntered into the room. "Well. Don't you two make an adorable couple! Couple of playthings, that is." His smile widened and he bounced slightly on his toes.

Sherlock rolled his eyes. "Yes, lovely to see you too, dear Jim. I'd ask you why we're here, but I'm rather certain I already know the answer."

"JUST so," Moriarty answered, walking around them slowly. Molly's eyes were fearful, Sherlock's were wary. Perfect, perfect.

"So many things," Moriarty said softly. He moved over to them and began running his fingers through Molly's hair, enjoying the way she cried out and tried to pull away. "So very many things I could do."

"This game is supposed to be between us," Sherlock said tightly. "Why do you insist on dragging other people into it?"

Moriarty looked at him. "Is this the part where you tell me if I let Molly go, I can do whatever I want to you?"

"Dull, but accurate," Sherlock answered.

"Sherlock, Sherlock. Don't you know having sweet Molly here will liven things up? You know, I had wondered about you and the good Doctor Watson. It took a little time to be sure, but... it's not true! You've never been lovers. He found himself a lovely lady: what is her name again? Oh, yes: Mary Morstan. They even have a daughter, don't they? So sweet. And you were the best man. I saw a video of your little speech, you know. Still sentimental about your pets, aren't you."

He moved now to stand behind Sherlock, slowly running his hands down Sherlock's back. "And you, Sherlock. So reserved, so analytical. What will it be like, I wonder, stripping that away from you?"

"Keep wondering," Sherlock said dryly.
"Oh, I won’t have to wonder for much longer," Moriarty said softly, stepping away from Sherlock at last. "And well done, by the way, for not trying anything stupid."

"I saw the men at the door the second you opened it," Sherlock said disdainfully. "Unlike you, my brain has not turned to pudding from mad schemes."

"Mad being the operative word," Moriarty smirked. "Well, I think I'll let you two crazy kids be for now. We'll start having our fun in the morning."

"Leave her," Sherlock said almost angrily. "You don't need her."

"Oh, but I do. She’s critical for these...experiments. But let's let her decide for herself, hmm? Molly? Would you leave here right now, unharmed, if you knew it meant a slow, painful death for Sherlock?"

"What? No!" Molly exclaimed in horror.

"Molly, leave!" Sherlock snapped. "He'll kill me regardless!"

"NOT true!" Moriarty piped up, causing both of them to stare. "Sherlock, how dull can you be? We've been through this killing business, you and I. Rather boring, wasn't it? No, no, my dear. I want you to live. Live a long, full life. You and Molly, actually. And I'll even tell you your Christmas presents early: one day, I'm going to let you both go."

"Let us go?" Sherlock asked. "Alive?"

"Well, of course, stupid." Moriarty rolled his eyes. "You just won't know when!"

His eyes took on a frightening intensity. "It could be days. Or it could be years. You won't know. I don't know. That's part of the fun, isn't it?"

He laughed, enjoying their expressions. "Right. Good night, then!" He sauntered out the door, pausing to look back at them. "I'll have the keys sent round with your nighttime cocktails. Do be good and put them back on the tray at the door when you've unlocked them. Sweet dreams!"

The door closed behind him with a metallic hiss.

Once upon a time, Sherlock Holmes did not believe in heroes.

He still wasn’t entirely certain that he did.

But having known John Watson for three years, two months and seventeen days, Sherlock had slowly begun to consider the possibility that he might have been a bit mistaken. Might. A bit.

And if he had to consider this possibility, he also had to entertain the idea that other people he knew were heroes in their own way.

People like Molly Hooper, for example.

She’d helped him fake his death, kept the secret well enough to fool even John, sheltered him for those first few weeks before he’d left to bring down Moran and the rest of the network. She’d been loyal, wise, and kind.

And now she was being repaid for all that by being handcuffed to him in the middle of a room that had been painted with the insanity of Moriarty.
Sounded about right. No one who called Sherlock Holmes friend ever had an easy life after he barred his way into it.

The feel of Molly sagging against him brought Sherlock back into focus. Her heartbeat was raging against his chest like a symphony. She was afraid. He understood her fear intellectually: remembered what fear felt like even though he wasn’t experiencing any himself.

He idly wondered if that could change.

This wasn’t helping Molly, however. And since he was currently rather attached to her, he needed to do something before she developed a full-blown anxiety attack.

“Molly,” he said, in what he thought was a reassuring tone. "Look at me-Molly," he said sharply, feeling her shaking increase so much that her body was like a badly-used marionette on a twisted string. "Molly, look at me."

She did as he commanded: looking up at him with an expression of fear and dread.

“Molly, I know you’re frightened but you need to stay calm.”

“Easy for the Great Sherlock Holmes to say,” she managed to get out before a sob tore itself from her throat.

Sherlock sighed and directed her with his body to walk backwards until she was pressed between him and the wall for support. All the while she struggled with the hysteria bubbling inside her, like a cat trying to claw its way out. She buried her face against his shirt, not caring if it irritated him. She wasn’t like him, no one was like him. She was emotional and, and normal, and she was truly and properly scared.

He made no effort to distance himself from her. He simply stood quietly, letting her feel the warm solidity of his body and listen to his heartbeat. Molly had never been this close to him, pressed against him this way. It was something that she’d wished for desperately dozens, even hundreds of times, but none of those fantasies had ever involved anything remotely like this.

Sherlock could tell she was drawing strength and comfort from his nearness, as he’d hoped she would. The last thing either of them needed right now was for Molly to have a meltdown, and if extra effort was necessary on his part to keep that from happening it was a small price to pay. She didn’t deserve impatience or to be made to feel stupid for reacting the way most people would.

When he judged that she was in control of herself enough to speak, he leaned down and nudged her forehead with his, startling her into looking up at him.

“Molly, listen to me,” he said quietly. "I don’t know what Moriarty is plotting or what exactly he has in mind to do to us. But I will do everything I can to protect you. Do you understand?"

She nodded, blinking hard to hold the tears shimmering in her eyes at bay. "Do…do you think you can get us out of here?" she asked, taking a slow, deep breath and feeling her heartbeat slow down slightly.

“I don’t know," he said truthfully. Then, in an effort to lighten the situation a bit, he added: “I seem to be somewhat restrained at the moment.”

It had the desired effect: Molly managed a weak chuckle. "Not what you wanted this morning when you woke up, I'm sure," she joked feebly, and he smiled.
“It wasn’t on my list, no,” he agreed. "However, it has been a valuable learning experience.”

Before Molly could ask him what he meant, the pet door was pushed open and another silver tray was slid into the room. When they made their way to it they found the handcuff keys, two champagne glasses filled with something that didn’t resemble champagne, and a note. *Drink up!*

Sherlock wasted no time in releasing them from the handcuffs, putting the key back on the tray as instructed. Molly went to the lavatory as he picked up one of the glasses and sniffed at the murky yellow contents.

*Orange juice, peach nectar, pomegranate. Diazepam, hydroxyzine. Clearly he wants us to sleep and not function at full mental capacity.*

The thought of his mind being dulled by drugs was the closest thing Sherlock had felt to fear since waking up beside Molly in this room from Hell.

Molly came out of the lavatory and knelt beside him. "What’s in them?" she asked.

"Sedatives," he replied. "Apparently Moriarty wants to make sure we get a good night’s sleep. Though I suspect it’s more for me than it is for you."

Molly glanced down. "So, we drink up, then?"

"We likely have little choice," Sherlock replied. "Moriarty is no doubt watching everything we do in here, if not actively listening as well. Subterfuge is going to be a bit difficult."

He handed Molly a glass. "Normally people make a toast with these, but I don’t think that’s quite appropriate here."

"We could toast to staying alive," Molly suggested, and Sherlock’s eyes shot to hers at once.

"Staying alive… Molly Hooper, you are amazing!"

Molly frowned. "I am?"

"You are.” Sherlock chuckled, and Molly was more confused than ever. Especially when instead of explaining himself, Sherlock clinked his to hers. "To staying alive, Molly Hooper. Both of us."

She took a sip and frowned. "I don’t understand you sometimes, Sherlock. Why is that important?"

He shook his head. "I’ll tell you in a bit. As for not understanding me: that can’t possibly be a new occurrence."

"It’s not," she sighed, taking another, larger sip.

Sherlock neatly gulped down the contents of his glass in four large swallows, then placed it on the tray. He looked at her unfinished glass and frowned. "What are you waiting for, Molly? Drink up so we can go to bed."

Once upon a time, Molly Hooper would never have thought the words “we” and “bed” would be used by Sherlock Holmes when speaking to her.

How many more times was she going to be proven wrong while they were prisoners?

And the way he was looking at her, puzzled, slightly impatient, didn’t help matters.
“We can go… to bed? Us?” She squeaked.

“Yes, of course. “

“Why… why would you want to go to bed now?” She asked, confused. “With me. Now.”

Sherlock managed not to roll his eyes. “Obviously that is what he wants.”

“And we want to do what he wants…why?” She held up a hand. “No, don’t. I figured that one out for myself, thank you.”

“Oh, wonderful,” Sherlock replied under his breath.

“But we don’t need to… there’s a sofa,” she said plaintively.

He blinked. “I didn’t realize sleeping next to me would be such a hardship for you, Molly.”

“NO, it’s not, it’s… uncomfortable, is all,” she said, and he frowned again. “I mean, won’t it be? For you?”

“Do you have night terrors or sleepwalk or shove your bedmates out of the bed in your sleep?”

“No, none of that…” Molly said.

He jumped up in one swift motion, looking down at her. “Then there is nothing of concern.” He held out a hand to her, and she slowly took it, eyes widening as he quickly and effortlessly pulled her to her feet. He nodded toward the wardrobes. “Come on.”

Molly allowed him to all but drag her over and deposit her in front of her wardrobe. “Wear whatever you like,” Sherlock told her, absently flicking his eyes over the clothes again. “It doesn’t matter to me in the slightest what you wear to bed.”

“Thanks,” Molly muttered as she sifted through the various nightgowns and pajamas.

“What?” Sherlock asked, perplexed. “Why did that offend you?”

“It didn’t,” Molly answered.

“Clearly it did, from your response,” he countered, pulling out a pair of dark purple pajamas.

“It didn’t,” Molly repeated forcefully. She grabbed a knee-length dark green nightgown and strode towards the lavatory.

“Why are you going to the lavatory to change?” Sherlock asked, undressing. Was she deliberately trying to annoy him?

“Because I want some privacy,” Molly snapped, wheeling around to look at him.

She stopped in mid-motion when she saw he was shirtless and halfway to being trouserless.

“What are you doing!” she exclaimed, feeling her cheeks flush.

He stared. “Changing clothes.”

“In front of me?” Molly spluttered.
“Your back was turned; it was hardly ‘in front of you’, Molly.”

“Fine,” she answered, spinning around again and heading into the lavatory.

Sherlock pulled off his underwear and sighed, hoping that the entire time he lived with Molly, however long that was, would not be so exasperating.
The Dead Live to Tell

Chapter Summary

After some separate time musing, Sherlock and Molly have a talk.

Once upon a time, Jim Moriarty had been bored.

Then he’d found Sherlock, and been distracted. And then Sherlock had gone into hiding after faking his death, killing off the assassins, and leaving him bored again.

That was no longer going to be a problem.

He now had Sherlock right where he wanted him… locked up, drugged, in a bed waiting for Molly to join him.

No snuff film Moriarty had ever touched had given him anywhere remotely near the same thrill as he had at that moment.

Oh, it was sick. Perverse. Deranged and twisted six ways to Sunday and a basket of kittens. But as he’d told Sherlock that night at the pool: that was rather the point. What was he supposed to be doing, writing love poems? Watching telly? Giving peace a chance? He’d done all that already, out of curiosity. Bored, bored, bored.

No, those ordinary things weren’t what drove Jim Moriarty. He was possessed of an insatiable hunger, yes: but it was a hunger for knowledge. Understanding. Learning, as it were. He was, after all, the world’s only and greatest consulting criminal. Sex had its moments, he wouldn’t lie, but after the hormonal high wore off it was lacking. Same thing with drugs. He’d tried them all. Some had been more interesting than others. Unlike Sherlock, he favored the depressants. The calm they gave him, the sensation of everything just washing over him, was oddly freeing.

That was part of the reason he’d had hydroxyzine added to their drinks. The doses were different: he’d arranged for Molly to only have 25 MG of it. She wasn’t used to drugs and that was still going to hit her system like a ton of bricks. If he’d given her any more she’d have been dulled the next day, and that wasn’t what Moriarty wanted.

Sherlock, on the other hand, he’d given the maximum safe dosage: 100 MG. That wouldn’t be enough to knock him out: knocking Sherlock out took something much stronger than hydroxyzine. But the combination with the diazepam would make him drowsy, take the edge off him. That was all Moriarty wanted.

He turned his attention away from the cameras (one of each side of the room: none in the bathroom because he was, at heart, a gentleman) and back to his journal. Moriarty loved computers. He used them extensively. But not for the really important things. Those were stored in his head or in a journal. He carried the journal constantly except when he slept, and then it was tucked under his pillow, filling his head with delights in his dreams. Moriarty didn’t believe in luck, not really. But if he did, the journal would definitely be his good luck charm.

He idly perused some notes he’d made the night before, adding a few more sentences and ideas. He
was always coming up with new ideas. If he kept Sherlock and Molly with him for a decade he might have time to test them all. But Moriarty knew that wouldn’t happen. No, his experiments, as fascinating as they were going to be, wouldn’t hold his attention longer than a year. He’d known that all along.

But he was certainly not going to inform them of that.

He whistled “Twisted Nerve” as he closed the journal and replaced it in his breast pocket. He needed to go down to the lab and ensure everything would be ready for the next day. Then he was going to take some drugs of his own and let the violet and blue haze claim him until morning. In the morning, he wanted to be at his best.

Once upon a time, Sherlock Holmes had never shared a bed with anyone.

Thank you, Jim Moriarty, for changing that.

It wouldn’t have mattered, honestly, were it not for the fact that Sherlock understood the significance of only one bed. It wasn’t sexual: wasn’t intended to be. No, it was something far worse that Moriarty was aiming for with the single bed: intimacy. Body heat, close proximity, the situation of being prisoners creating an easy common bond. Sherlock knew all about hostage syndrome, thank you very much. It didn’t change anything.

Except, of course, that it changed everything.

Sherlock was good at deductions. No: better than good. He was exceptional. Nearly unmatched. But even skills as sharp as a steel blade couldn’t always accurately predict what a person was capable of. Especially under extremely stressful, dangerous circumstances. And even though he wasn’t afraid, he could recognize an extremely stressful and dangerous circumstance when he saw one, and this was definitely it.

Translation: Molly could be a wild card in his hand, one that he had no idea how she would play out. Molly was more intelligent than most, but she was still an ordinary person with ordinary feelings, and there was a very real possibility that whatever was about to happen was going to turn her into an utter emotional wreck.

He needed her to stay calm. Well, as calm as possible. The more they gave Moriarty, the more he’d want. Their incarceration would be like a drug for him, giving him an abundance of emotions to feed upon as though he was a vampire. Unfortunately, there was a very real possibility that Sherlock himself wouldn’t be able to withstand whatever Moriarty was planning. His use of the word “experiments” had left a cold sour taste in Sherlock’s mouth. It smacked of laboratories and clipboards and test tubes. None of which spoke of anything good for him and Molly.

He wasn’t worried about them being killed. Oddly enough, Moriarty could be counted upon to keep his word. But that still left a very open field. Well. Tomorrow he’d feel his way around and feel Moriarty out to get a better idea of what lay in store. Tonight he was going to have a chat with Molly.

Oh, yes. In private.

Sherlock knew Moriarty well enough to know he wouldn’t have bugged the lavatory. He had no idea when Molly would come back out and he didn’t want to wait any longer.

Once upon a time, Molly Hooper had wanted to be Sherlock Holmes’ friend.
And now she was, and look where it had gotten her.

Locked up with a man she loved and hated and respected and pitied and admired and desired.

Although, the desire aspect was nowhere to be seen under the circumstances, thank goodness.

Love was also suspect, come to think of it. Her love for him had gotten her into this position but it wasn’t likely to get her out.

She’d had a chance to leave, but how could she have left knowing Sherlock would die? She’d have been a coward, a murderess, and no one would have ever forgiven her, especially herself. Even though she’d signed her warrant for... something by staying, whatever happened her conscience would be free of guilt.

She looked at herself in the mirror and sighed. The nightgown was pretty. Why had Moriarty done that? Why had he given her gorgeous clothes? There was no one to see her but Sherlock, and he didn’t care what she looked like. He’d made that obvious about two years ago at Christmas. What did it matter what she looked like?

She was about to leave when the door flew open and Sherlock swept inside, closing it behind him. He wore the dark purple pajamas and Molly hated her heart for doing a little flip at the sight of him like this. They’d been locked up by a lunatic! Then her brain took back over.

“Sherlock, what are you doing in here? You knew I was changing clothes!”

“Yes, but we need to talk and this is the only way we can do so without being overheard.”

“But he’ll know we’re talking,” Molly said.

“He won’t care about that. On the contrary, he’ll expect it.”

Molly frowned. “He will?”

“Of course he will. Now listen, Molly.” Sherlock’s eyes locked with hers. “Whatever happens while we’re here, it is important for you to remain as calm and controlled as possible. The more you react, the more Moriarty will like it.”

“What about you?”

Sherlock frowned. “What about me?”

“You think you’re made of stone or something?”

“No. But I know it will be far easier for me to control my feelings than it will be for you to control yours.”

“Well then, that should just make him want to focus on you,” Molly said, crossing her arms over her chest and looking down. “Since you’re so bloody special.”

“Why are you taking everything I say personally?” Sherlock asked irately. “As strange as this may sound to you, Molly, I am not insulting you with my words. I am stating facts.”

Molly sighed, glancing up at him. “I know. I’m... I’m afraid, Sherlock.”

“It’s understandable,” he replied. He rested his hands lightly on her shoulders. “But it is also what he wants. You must let me draw his attention away from you and onto me as much as possible. It’s
the best way I can keep you safe since you foolishly refused to leave.”

“Foolishly!” Molly exclaimed. “He said he’d kill you!”

“Oh, he was probably bluffing,” Sherlock said dismissively.

“I wasn’t taking that chance!” Molly said angrily. “Would you have left me if it had been reversed?”

“Of course not!” he said indignantly.

“Well I wasn’t about to leave you either. So whatever happens, we’ll have to deal with it. So there,” she added, raising her chin defiantly and staring at him.

They stood looking at each other, his hands still on her shoulders. Somehow her arms had uncrossed and her hands had moved up to rest on top of his. Embarrassed, she dropped her arms to her sides, feeling a blush on her cheeks, but she continued to stare up at him.

A faint but genuine smile twitched on Sherlock’s lips as he lowered his hands. “Well. I believe that covers it, then. Lead the charge, Molly Hooper.”

She gave him a fleeting answering smile as she moved past him to open the door.
Once upon a time, Molly Hooper would have loved being in bed with Sherlock Holmes.

Not so much now.

For a man who disliked sleeping, Sherlock was a fussy bedmate. He turned several times, curling and uncurling his legs, huffing and puffing until finally he flipped onto his back and stared sullenly up at the ceiling.

Molly guessed they had been in bed for all of five minutes.

This did not bode well for the night.

She was wondering if hoping the drugs would settle Sherlock down made her a bad person when he suddenly turned again and faced her.

“Would you like to have sex, Molly?” He asked.

Molly blinked. “What, no, sorry: WHAT?”

“It was a simple question,” Sherlock said patiently. “Or so I thought,” he muttered under his breath.

“You… would… Sherlock, we’ve been KIDNAPPED! And we’re about to be turned into… I don’t know, lab rats, guinea pigs, and you want to know if I want to have SEX?”

“So that’s a no?” He asked.

“Yes!”

“So you DO want to?”

“No, I MEAN, YES, that’s a NO!” Molly shrieked.

Sherlock sighed. “There’s no need for beating around the bush, Molly.”

“Why the bloody hell would you even ask me that?” She demanded, ignoring his dramatics. “You don’t do sex!”

He peered at her closely. “How do you know?”

Now she sighed. “Sherlock. I’m no God of Deduction but I do know a virgin when I see one.”

He blinked. “Fair enough I suppose. As to why I asked: it was a test.”

“A test,” Molly echoed. “For me or for Moriarty?”

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**Pillow Talk**

Chapter Summary

Sherlock and Molly surprise each other while talking in bed.
“Moriarty, of course. Well done for thinking out of the box on that one though,” Sherlock said.

“You wanted to see if he’d stop us,” Molly said, emboldened by his casual praise. “Or if he’d encourage it. Or react at all.”

“Mm, yes. I suspect that he’s asleep though. Still, we can always try again.” Sherlock mused.

“The rat testing the scientist?”

He glanced at her sharply. “I’m no rat and neither are you.”

“So what do you call it, then?” Molly asked.

Sherlock didn’t answer.

An uncomfortable silence passed.

“What would you have done if I’d said yes?” Molly asked.

“You did say yes,” Sherlock said placidly.

“No I mean… if I’d really said yes.”

He glanced at her again. “Then we would have done. Well, provided I was certain he knew what was going on.”

“We…would have done,” Molly repeated. “With him watching. Listening. You think we would have done.”

Sherlock frowned. “You have wanted to have sex with me for fourteen months, three weeks and five days, give or take a possible day. Would the particulars really matter that much?”

“Can you tell how long I’ve wanted to punch you, too?” Molly asked. She trembled slightly in anger. How fucking dare he treat her feelings for him like something to be trifled with? Then again, with a few exceptions, when had he done otherwise?

“Don’t be ridiculous, you’ve never wanted to punch me,” Sherlock said.

“Don’t sound so convinced,” Molly snapped. She turned onto her other side, and his eyebrows rose in surprise.

Another uncomfortable silence ensued.

“I’ve upset you,” Sherlock murmured finally.

“No more calls, we have a winner,” Molly said.

“This is not a game, Molly. It may be for him, but it isn’t for us. Anything I, we, can do to discover what he’s planning or see how to get a reaction is fair game. I realize that my approach upset you, however, and for that, I am sorry.”

Another silence, but this one was not quite as uncomfortable.

“You said you’d tell me about Staying Alive,” Molly finally said with a yawn. The drugs were starting to kick in for her. She turned back to face him.
“It is, or was, the ringtone on Moriarty’s mobile,” Sherlock murmured. “He despises a state of simply being, existing. He always needs more. Just ‘staying’ is a disappointment for him. That’s what drives him. That need.”

“Just like you,” Molly said, and Sherlock almost looked stricken.

“No, I mean… you both have that need to push beyond what other people have,” Molly explained. “Otherwise you’d stay bored and it would eat your brain and you’d come undone. I didn’t mean you’re an evil man. You’re not. You’re one of the best men I’ve ever known.”

Once upon a time, Sherlock Holmes would not have thought Molly Hooper capable of insight.

And one day she’d looked him square in the face and said: “You look sad… when you think he can’t see you.”

He did so hate to be wrong.

And now she’d done it again. She had, in fact, done it several times since that night. Tonight, though, there was something particularly poignant in her turn of phrase. Push beyond what other people have. You’d come undone.

And most disturbing of all: You’re one of the best men I’ve ever known.

Echoes of John there and she didn’t even know it. Was this a part of this love she had for him? How could she understand him so well in some ways and still think that? How could John, for that matter?

Molly was started when Sherlock slid closer to her, pale blue eyes fixedly observing her face. “How can you say that?” He asked, genuinely bewildered. “You and John both. How can you say that when you know what I’ve done?”

She shrugged sleepily. “It’s the truth.”

“I don’t want to be a good man,” he said, but something in his voice belied his words.

“You think it’s that simple?” Molly asked. “That everything is black or white and obvious? It’s not. Not even for you. Anyone can be bad or good. What matters is what you do with it.”

Sherlock’s gaze sharpened again, piercing her as his eyes locked with hers. Molly was too drugged and sleepy to be self-conscious so she just stared back.

Sherlock was the one to break the contact. “I think the drugs are kicking in,” he said. “We’d best get some sleep.”

He turned over facing away from her and pulled up the covers. Molly turned away from him as well, staring at the wall. She had the fleeting impression he’d been about to say something else. The lights went out and the sedatives caused her brain to sink down into its own particular darkness.
Good Morning Vietman

Chapter Summary

Everyone is awake and the first game is about to begin.

Once upon a time, Jim Moriarty never got much out of games.

Oh, he loved them. It was just that he didn’t have a worthy opponent. And so they always ended rather quickly. And he always won. You would think that he’d be glad for that, but he wasn’t. It made him angry that he always won, because it was too easy. How could he test himself, how could he know his true limits and genius if there was no one worthy of defeating him?

This had gone on for years. And then: enter Sherlock Holmes.

Contrary to anyone’s opinion, he’d been ecstatic that Sherlock had lived. It was a sign, you see: a sign that they were meant to distract each other all their lives! He didn’t have much use for all that metaphysical crap, but even he could recognize a parallel when he saw one.

He no longer wanted to kill Sherlock. That would destroy all his fun. It was a bit like: oh, what were those stupid American films? Oh, yes: Smokey & the Bandit. The sheriff finally caught up with Bandit, only to realize that if he took him in, his life would lose its purpose. His ultimate challenge and drive would be gone. Boring, ordinary life. So the sheriff had let him go in order to catch him another day.

Sherlock was his Bandit. And for this film, Molly Hooper was the loyal sidekick.

He knew he’d confused them by telling them he was going to let them go. Alive. He snorted. Really, Sherlock? No: I’m going to kill you and then let you go. How stupid. Was it that hard to believe? Sure, having them as his lab pets was going to be fun. But the glitter would fade from that eventually, as it always did. Then he’d need something new again.

He wondered what would happen once he let them go. With their final parting gift, of course. Wasn’t that going to cause a stir! He grinned just thinking about it. Oh, he wished he’d get to see the looks on their faces. He wouldn’t, but he could imagine. Some things were best left to the imagination.

He glanced at the clock. It was time.

He sauntered over to the intercom system and clicked it on.

“GOOD MORNING, VIETNAM!” he yelled into the microphone.

As he watched them startle (Molly jumped, Sherlock jerked his head up) he chuckled.

“Sorry,” he said, almost contritely and in a softer voice. “I’ve always wanted to say that.”

Once upon a time, Sherlock Holmes had wished for a real challenge.

He was beginning to question the wisdom of that wish a bit.
He and Molly had been allowed to awaken naturally, which meant that Moriarty wanted them well-rested and clear-headed for whatever this little game was. As a scientist he knew all about baselines; clearly that was what this was going to be.

They had showered and dressed and been served breakfast (drug free) through the pet door. It wasn’t large enough for either him or Molly to wiggle through (he could fix that, but it would likely not go unnoticed) and though he’d contemplated trying to grab whomever it was that brought things to them he doubted it would be of much use. Moriarty was smart enough not to let them have access to a key, and would likely consider any of his helpers expendable.

After eating a bit (both of them forced themselves to eat, neither were much hungry) Sherlock began to play the violin and Molly started reading again. They hadn’t spoken much because there wasn’t much of anything to say yet, really. Knowing that something was going to happen hung over them like a dark, thick fog, but until they could see there wasn’t much point in stating the obvious.

The violin was excellent quality (Bergonzi, Moriarty couldn’t be bothered to get someone’s Stradivarius) as was Molly’s small piano (Dusseldorf, he didn’t know they made them half-sized, must have been a custom request). Sherlock wondered for a moment if they would be expected to play a duet. Obviously Molly was proficient enough that Moriarty wanted her to play: how had he known? Sherlock hadn’t known until he’d briefly stayed with Molly before leaving to track down the assassins. Most likely when he’d come over for their “date” he’d charmed her into playing for him.

Sherlock frowned. He’d never asked Molly about her time with “Jim from IT” because he’d assumed there was nothing relevant to be gained. Now he wondered if Moriarty had counted on that and if Molly perhaps unknowingly held a vital clue.

He was just about to stop playing and ask her about “dear Jim” when Moriarty’s voice shook the silence of the room.

“GOOD MORNING, VIETNAM!”

Sherlock’s head jerked reflexively in the direction of the sound, and Molly jumped and clutched the book to her chest, looking around the room with wide, panicked eyes. A gleeful chuckle followed, and then Moriarty said:

“Sorry. I’ve always wanted to say that.”

Once upon a time, Molly Hooper had lived a relatively happy, peaceful life.

And someone, somewhere, had said: “oh, do you think so?” and chucked Sherlock Holmes into her existence.

Molly really, really wanted to find that someone (Deity? Devil?) and give him or her a good shouting at. Possibly adding some fist-clenching and shoulder-shaking for good measure.

Loving him hurt. It made being around him hurt. But she would hurt just as much if he was gone. She was holding a live wire and didn’t know what to do. She’d actually been considering telling him she needed a break from him. And then this had happened.

Molly felt like she was just some great cosmic joke and she was tired of it.

Maybe she should have said yes when he’d asked her if she wanted sex. It would probably have made whatever was going to happen more bearable. But she could imagine his face: detached, clinical, not a whit of real affection or passion, and that would’ve been even worse.
Or that’s what she thought right now, anyway. Who knew what her answer would be an hour from now. Or his. She might never want to lay eyes on him again by tomorrow. Not that she had a choice. But deep down she didn’t really believe that. She’d endured this much from Sherlock: for Sherlock. If it was so easy to stop loving him, she’d have done it long ago.

“GOOD MORNING, VIETNAM!”

Molly jumped at the sound of Moriarty’s happy voice echoing through the room. She look round and saw Sherlock fixed on the source of the sound. He glanced at her, his expression unreadable.

“Sorry,” Moriarty said after a pause. “I’ve always wanted to say that.”

“Adrian Cronauer would be appalled,” Sherlock said coolly.

“Most likely,” Moriarty replied cheerfully. “Are you kids ready to play? I’ve got so much to show you!”

“I was rather getting the hang of this violin,” Sherlock said, sounding mildly disappointed.

“You’ll have time for that later, honey,” Moriarty said. “Handcuffs, if you please.”

“Together or separate?” Sherlock asked.

“Separate, of course: hands in front of you. You can play your kinky games later if you’re up to it. See you soon!”

Sherlock put the violin back in its case and fetched the handcuffs as Molly stood up. He took her small, warm hands in his and snapped the cuffs on with quick precise movements while Molly felt her stomach plummet and heart hammer.

“Remember what I told you, Molly,” Sherlock said softly. His eyes flicked over her briefly. “As strange as it sounds, Moriarty keeps his word. He’s not going to kill us.”

“I know. That’s not what I’m worried about,” she replied as he cuffed himself.

“Then what are you worried about?” he asked.

“That he’ll just make us wish we were dead,” Molly said quietly.

Sherlock had no response to that.

The door opened and half a dozen men dressed in suits came in. Molly stared at him one last time before they were spun around and led into the hall.
Thieves Rush in

Chapter Summary

Sherlock and Molly see the lab for the first time. Moriarty takes something irreplaceable from Molly and Sherlock stumbles through the fallout.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

They were herded into a lift at the end of the third hall. Their guards stared ahead, expressionless and silent. Sherlock had contemplated taking them on but wasn’t sure of what would happen to Molly in the process. He also wasn’t sure of what Moriarty would do to John, Mrs. Hudson or Lestrade before they could warn them.

None of the men were armed and none of them were carrying mobiles, keys, or any other devices from what he could see. Though it was quite possible he could subdue them all before Molly got hurt, they’d have to try and escape with no knowledge of the layout of this place or where they were. Or how to contact anyone for help and tell them they could be in danger.

No, Sherlock decided. Best to wait and observe before he acted.

He counted down two floors before the elevator stopped and opened. They were led to an intersection and taken down the left corridor. One of the men opened the door and they were led in.

The room looked like one huge set from a science fiction medical bay crossed with a sex club. In one corner were two medical exam beds less than a meter apart. In another, two glass tubes ran from the floor to the ceiling, each one large enough for a human to fit inside. Heavy wooden chairs with restraints fitted to them were placed close together on a wall next to a gleaming metal machine that had a lot of wires and electrodes attached to it. Another corner held an ordinary looking four-poster bed with a metal frame, pillows but no duvet, fitted with what looked like a black silk sheet.

There were two surgical trolleys: one was empty and one held a variety of small instruments: scalpels, forceps, speculums, syringes, and a dozen or so other items including a box marked “vials.” A box of latex gloves was on a shelf by a sink along with soap and sanitizer dispensers. Flexible surgical lamps were scattered around the room. There was a door in the middle of a wall but it was closed.

Near the bed, two sets of chains were suspended from the ceiling with leather wrist restraints affixed to the ends. On the floor there were chains as well, with similar cuffs obviously intended for ankles. Molly didn’t have to be Sherlock Holmes to see by the height of the top ones that one set was intended for her and one for him.

There were other various pieces of equipment scattered around: a treadmill, a MRI machine, and a few things Molly had never seen before. In the fourth corner sat a surgical steel exam table, the kind you performed operations on, clean and brightly polished. Molly paled when she saw it.

Sherlock’s voice snapped her out of her thoughts. “What, no sex swing?”
“Do you want one?” Moriarty’s voice floated across the room. He was bouncing on his toes as he walked over to them, unable to hide his delight.

“It’s not up to me,” the detective said with a careless shrug.

“I’d be most happy to get you one,” Moriarty purred, grabbing Sherlock’s chin and staring hard into his face. “I wouldn’t have thought you were the type though. Would you, Molly?”

Molly paled again but managed to respond: “I never thought about… that.”

This seemed to delight Moriarty even more. “Oh, Molly, Molly.” He left Sherlock and grabbed Molly by the chin instead, his amused eyes meeting her fearful ones. “You’re rather a poor liar, aren’t you? Well, except for when you were protecting his secret. I bet he never even thanked you properly for that, did he?”

“He thanked me,” Molly said woodenly.

“How? By not being quite such a bastard to you? Not making nasty comments about the way you look?” Moriarty asked with a laugh. “Or did he actually manage to choke out a thank you just before he demanded your help him half the night in the lab?”

“Stop it!” Molly said angrily. “You don’t know him!”

“Oh, but I do, honey. I do,” Moriarty said quietly. “Because you see, he’s me. Only he’s on the side of the angels even if he’s not one. And he doesn’t care—” he leaned right into Molly’s face—“a fucking thing about you.”

“Stop it!” Sherlock snapped. “Stop it now!”

“Oh, I’m sorry, am I wrong?” Moriarty asked sweetly, letting go of Molly and turning back to Sherlock. “Did you manage to feel grateful that Molly saved you?” He moved close and stared into Sherlock’s eyes. “Did you thank her properly? Maybe you even gave her a pity jump: is that it?”


“It will be,” Moriarty replied. He stepped to Sherlock’s right side and leaned in, his voice pitched low and insanely intimate-sounding. “It will be. Because I own you right now, Sherlock. I.Own.You. And Molly, too.”

And he licked a long, slow path up the side of Sherlock’s face.

Sherlock didn’t move. Molly didn’t understand how he didn’t at least flinch. She wasn’t so certain she wouldn’t have done that and more. But Sherlock wasn’t like most people, She knew that. She also knew he was trying to keep the focus on himself, as he’d said he would. It made her afraid, relieved, guilty, and angry all at once.

Moriarty, meanwhile, stood looking at the faint shiny trail he’d left on Sherlock’s cheek. “Lovely handiwork, don’t you think?”

“I suppose, if you like feeling as though you’ve been licked by a dog,” Sherlock answered dryly.

Moriarty merely laughed. “Consider it a welcome to the lab. Oh, can’t leave Molly out, can I? I don’t want you to get jealous, my dear.” And he grasped her head in his hands and did the same thing to her.
Molly managed to only flinch as he did it. Having forewarning had helped lessen the shock. She stared at him. “What are you going to do to us?” She asked.

“Oh, not much today: first day and all. Let’s start with a few basics, shall we?”

*          *          *          *          *          *          *

An hour later they were lying on the exam tables, watching. Moriarty had forced them to undress, then he’d preceded to give them both actual physical examinations. He’d taken their vital signs, weighed them, used calipers to determine their muscle-to-fat ratio (he’d told Molly to stop eating quite so many crisps and told Sherlock to eat more and eat better), monitored their hearts on EKGs. He also took blood, urine, and hair. Everything Sherlock had expected.

What he hadn’t expected was for Moriarty to turn to them, clap his hands, and say: “all right, time for one final little sample.”

Some of his men came and grabbed Molly from the table. “What’s going on?” She cried out in alarm.

“Where are you taking her?” Sherlock demanded.

Moriarty rolled his eyes. “Calm down, you sissies. I only want a few of your eggs.”

Molly’s face drained of color. “What!”

“I think you’ve collected enough ‘samples’,” Sherlock said heatedly.

“Don’t you worry, honey, I’m not leaving you out,” Moriarty smirked.

The men pushed Molly towards the door they’d seen earlier. She struggled, unable to stop the terror rising inside her. “No! Let me go! Stop!”

Sherlock shot off the table and Moriarty frowned at him. “I’d advise you to stay there. She won’t be harmed. It’s a simple operation, very little risk.”

“Very little… do you even know how to operate?” Molly shrieked.

“Well, no. But I have a surgeon waiting, silly. An entire medical team. You’ll be in good hands.”

Molly didn’t want to cry. She didn’t. But she couldn’t help it. She kept struggling and screaming until someone in hospital scrubs gave her an injection. All that time Sherlock looked on helplessly. As they sedated her, Molly’s eyes met his and he couldn’t look away.

“Sherlock,” Molly whispered. Then she slumped, unconscious.

“Easy with her, fellas,” Moriarty called as they lifted Molly and took her away. Then he turned back to Sherlock. “Now. OH, yes. I’ll be needing a sample from you as well.”

“In case you’d forgotten, I don’t have any eggs,” Sherlock said stiffly.

“No. But you do have what goes with them,” Moriarty replied with a big smile.

Sherlock tensed reflexively then went very still. “If all you wanted was a baby, you could’ve bought one on the black market, hired a surrogate, or had one abducted,” he said.

“I don’t want a baby. I want your baby. Yours and Molly’s. Well. I want the option of it. Not sure if
I’ll ever get round to actually doing it, but it’s nice to be prepared, isn’t it?”

“And just when I think you can’t possibly be any more insane,” Sherlock spat.

“Flatterer. Don’t worry, we’re going to do this the scientific way. I’m rather on a schedule. On the surgical table. Now.”

Sherlock complied, watching warily. “Auto ejaculation, I assume?”

“Got it in one,” Moriarty replied. “I’d give you the option of method, but, well, who knows how long wanking off would take you and I’ve got places to go.”

As he spoke he flipped some switches on a nearby device and then snapped on a pair of gloves. He dipped a long finger into a jar of lubricant and inspected it carefully while several of his men stood in the background. He checked a knob on the machine and then glanced down at Sherlock.

“Time’s a wastin.’ Spread your legs for daddy, Sherlock.”

“I’d rather do this myself,” Sherlock said.

“And let all the money I spent on this go to waste? Nonsense! Besides, I want to see how it does. We might make it part of our fun toy collection.” His face darkened a bit. “Now spread your legs.”

Sherlock complied after a few seconds, his eyes cast up at the ceiling, blocking everything else out. He tensed reflexively when Moriarty slipped the finger inside him and carefully worked it upward, finding the prostate and rubbing it gently but firmly until Sherlock’s body reflexively responded to the stimulation. Then he withdrew his finger and placed the probe plug into the socket, then replaced the finger inside Sherlock with the probe.

He grinned as he touched the switch. “Lights, camera, action!”

Sherlock couldn’t control his body’s convulsion as the current shot through him. It was a low-level current but it wasn’t what he would call pleasant. Nor did it hurt, exactly. It was a stimulus. A very compelling stimulus.

It took two tries before he ejaculated. Moriarty preserved the semen and handed it off to be stored safely away, then slid the probe out. “Was it as good for you as it was for me?” Moriarty grinned as he removed the gloves.

“I’m surprised you didn’t give the job over to someone else,” Sherlock said. “You hate getting your hands dirty.”

“I make exceptions,” Moriarty replied. He washed his hands. “Well, if I had any doubts left about you and Doctor Watson that took care of them. You’re tighter than an old lady’s purse strings. Of course, you could strictly be a top: but it’s unlikely you’d want to limit yourself.”

“Thank you for that theoretical discussion about my sex life,” Sherlock snapped. “Check on Molly.”

Moriarty rolled his eyes. “You’re going to be fun. But since you were such a good boy…” he walked over to the door and slid back the observation panel. “She’s fine. Operation is going nicely. You’ll have her back soon.”

“Transvaginal ultrasound aspiration?” Sherlock asked.

“Of course. They’ll be finished with her in about another half an hour. A few hours of recovery and
she’s all yours. I’m finished with you for today.”

“Lovely,” Sherlock said.

“Off you go, then,” Moriarty said cheerfully, ignoring the sneer in Sherlock’s tone. “You can get dressed first: wouldn’t want to offend your modesty further.”

Sherlock swung his legs down and got to his feet. “I’d like to clean up before I dress, actually. I’m a bit dirty at the moment.”

“Certainly.” Moriarty leaned over and planted a wet smacking kiss on Sherlock’s cheek. “Give that to Molly for me. She’s a scrapper, I can tell. This is going to be so much fun!”

Sherlock reigned in the impulse to spit in Moriarty’s face as he was escorted out of the lab.

It was fortunate, Sherlock thought, that their quarters allowed him ample room to pace. Because that’s what he had spent the past few hours doing. Alternating sitting and thinking and pacing and thinking, waiting for them to bring Molly back.

He’d gone over the sounds he could hear though the window, the passing of the sun, and what he knew so far about the building they were in. He’d concluded that although they were likely still in England, they were not in London. Beyond that, he wasn’t sure yet. He’d have to wait for more clues. Their room had a small stereo in it now, a Bose, and an MP3 player with over a thousand songs neatly organized in playlists. He wasn’t in the mood for music at the moment.

His thoughts shifted to Molly and what had happened in the lab. He hadn’t entirely been affecting sarcasm when he’d said he felt dirty. Knowing that Moriarty had the ability to scientifically create his and Molly’s offspring didn’t help matters any. Knowing that Moriarty had the ability to scientifically create his and Molly’s offspring didn’t help matters any.

Sherlock frowned as he paced. Why? Blackmail? Did he want to just keep it in the back in their minds to upset them? Or did he want to ensure another generation of Holmes’ and Hoopers for his distractions in case something went south with him and Molly?

Could be all of the above. Or none of the above. This was the problem with deducing madmen. They could be frustratingly unpredictable at times.

He didn’t have to be told by John that what had happened was not good. Or that Molly was going to be an emotional wreck when she came back. How was he to handle this? Even if he had normal emotional behavior and understanding, which he didn’t, he suspected he’d have no clue what one said to a woman who’d been abducted by your only rival and had some of her reproductive ability forcibly taken from her.

He frowned again. Did Molly even want to have children someday? He had no idea.

His thoughts were interrupted by the door opening. Molly was led in, dressed and uncuffed, her face paler than normal and marked by the unmistakable signs of crying. It was at odds with the blank expression she wore. He realized with a touch of unease that he couldn’t deduce anything from it. The men left as quickly as they’d arrived and it was just him and Molly and the stillness again.

Molly stood just inside the door, unmoving. Her expression didn’t change as he approached her.

“Molly?”

There still wasn’t any response from her. Shock, then.
“Molly?” Sherlock reached out and touched an arm. “Molly, can you hear me?”

She blinked slowly, and her eyes shifted to Sherlock’s face.

And she slapped him as hard as she could.

Sherlock hadn’t expected this and wasn’t prepared for the slap. Her fingers cracked against his cheek and the warmth of her slap, and her anger, echoed on his skin. He stared at her in bewilderment.

“What the hell?”

“You!” Molly screamed. “This is YOUR fault! You and your stupid consulting and your stupid deductions and not making sure he was dead! I helped you because I love you and now look what’s happened! Locked up like rats and he’s taken my eggs! My EGGS, Sherlock! The things that let me have babies!”

He kept staring at her because he honestly wasn’t sure what else to do. Her fear and hurt had shifted into scapegoating as a coping mechanism for her, which was understandable, but the slap had smarted and she was still furious. He stepped back a bit. “Molly I know this must be upsetting for you but you still have eggs. He didn’t take them all.” He thought his tone was comforting: it was, wasn’t it? Perhaps a hug was in order as well?

He knew he had misjudged his initial approach from the way she stared at him.

“That’s not the point! He took them! My eggs and he had no right and it’s your fault and I HATE YOU!”

He blanched at the venom in her voice, even though he knew it was the fear and pain talking. This time she swung at him to clock him. He grabbed her arm and then the other as she struggled and twisted and tried to kick him.

“Let go of me! Let go of me, Sherlock! I hate you!”

“No, you don’t,” he sighed, not releasing her.

“Yes, I do! Let GO of me, I said!”

He continued to hold her arms, hauling her against him as she swore and struggled. After another minute she stopped trying to get free. “I hate you,” she sobbed as she went limp against him.

Sherlock sighed. It was obvious some serious comforting was in order. Not his area, none of this was his area, but this was Molly and she deserved to be comforted. He picked her up and carried her to the sofa, lying on his back and holding her tight against him, pressing her head to his chest so she could hear his heartbeat. “I’m sorry Molly,” he whispered as she continued to sob. “I am sorry.”

Her crying went on in ragged gasps. She made no further effort to get loose, just lay against him sobbing until she cried herself out and was raw and exhausted. He kept whispering to her that he was sorry, one hand cupping her head, stroking her hair. She lay still, too drained to do anything but feel his warm body and hear the steady thrum of his heart.

“There was a time I’d have given anything for this,” Molly said softly, and his hands stilled though he didn’t move otherwise. She didn’t care. He already knew, he knew everything, and she was tired of the years she’d spent walking around that elephant in the morgue. “If I’d known what “anything” was going to entail, I’d have bloody well asked for something else.”

Sherlock exhaled in a puff of dark amusement, then resumed stroking her hair. “If I’d known
everything that was going to happen, I’d have asked for something else, too.”

He reached one hand up and took the stereo remote, found a playlist for classical music and hit play. Strains of Beethoven quietly filled the room. They lay together on the sofa in silence, Sherlock still stroking Molly’s hair, Molly falling asleep and Sherlock staring off into the distance lost in thought.

Chapter End Notes

For those of you who do a lot of writing, check out a piece of software called Scrivener. It's fantastic for keeping everything organized and easy to access.
Teach a Lesson

Chapter Summary

Sherlock and Molly go to a special class taught by Professor Moriarty.

Chapter Notes

This chapter is dedicated to breakaway on Tumblr for reasons. :)

A special thank you to CumberChelz for some Brit help and putting up with hours of me cackling like a madwoman.

I'm Sherlolly on Tumblr if you'd like to follow me.

This chapter contains a line from a Beck song. A cookie for you if you get it.

They were left alone, for the most part, for the next three days. They spent most of that time reading (both), pacing (Sherlock), sleeping (both but mostly Molly), and waiting. Conversation was interspersed in the time as well, but it was irregular, mostly occurring in brief bursts. Sherlock questioned Molly (not interrogated, he wasn’t that callous) about her time with Jim, but nothing that she could recall seemed useful at the moment. There was little for them to do but carry on until Moriarty’s return.

Molly was unusually quiet. She wasn’t a gregarious person to begin with, except when she was nervous. But her silence stretched through the room and wrapped around them both like a cocoon. It made Sherlock uneasy. He didn’t speak (or like anyone else too) when he was thinking. But Molly’s silence was wearing on him.

When she had awakened that first day after they’d been returned to their room, she’d thanked him and removed herself from his embrace as though she couldn’t get away fast enough. She hadn’t asked any questions, hadn’t tried to discuss it. Once that might have made him feel relieved. Now it made him apprehensive.

He couldn’t stand it any longer the morning of the fourth day and he asked her why she’d been silent: if he had done something wrong in his efforts to comfort her after the forced removal of some of the eggs from her ovaries.

She looked at him strangely and slowly shook her head. “No. You were… perfect.”

“Then why have you been silent?”

Molly looked at him quizzically. “You were being kind. What else is there to say?”

She returned to her book, leaving him more disquieted than before. Yes, he’d been kind. He wasn’t the sort of man who went around holding or apologizing to crying women. Both of those things involved feelings, and he’d always avoided them as best he could. Of course John had changed all
that, had put the first cracks in Sherlock’s armor. And when Moriarty returned and he knew he’d have to fall, he’d turned to Molly. And she’d saved his life, and taken care of him, and a few more cracks had appeared. He’d tried to seal them up, but it was no good. He’d gotten used to being cared about, and caring about people. Those very few people that he could count on one hand.

That caring had led him to do something he’d never done before: comfort someone by holding them. It hadn’t been horrid, except for what had been done to her. The actual act of holding her, though not pleasant, hadn’t made him want to get away from her. It hadn’t alarmed or disgusted him as it would have years ago. Yes, he felt responsible in a way for all this. He supposed maybe he also felt guilty. A bit. He wasn’t used to that, either. It had been simple: Molly had needed comfort. He had wanted her to feel better and calm down. He’d achieved the goals, well and done, everything should have been fine.

The feeling that it wasn’t almost left a taste in his mouth.

He was about to press her further when Moriarty’s voice came over the speakers.

“Hello, darlings! Did you miss me? Go on. You did, didn’t you, Sherlock? You missed daddy.”

Sherlock pressed his lips together slightly. “No.”

“Aww. Now I’m sad. NO worries, though: I’ve got just the thing to cheer me up! Put your cuffs on, kids: we’re going to school.”

Sherlock frowned. Molly looked uneasy. “School? What do we need to go to school for?”

“I believe he wants to teach us a lesson. Literally.”

Molly’s face scrunched up in confusion as Sherlock put the handcuffs on her. “In what? What could you possibly need to know?”

His frown deepened as he cuffed himself. Then his face smoothed out and he sighed. “Need to know? No. What could he want me to know is the question.”

“Well what’s the answer?”

Sherlock was cut off by the door opening. Their handlers came in and led them out.

This time they didn’t take the elevator. They turned down another hallway and were taken into what looked like a primary school classroom. There was a chalkboard on one wall with a teacher’s desk to one side. A globe sat in a corner near the chalkboard. In front of the chalkboard sat two adult-sized desks with chairs. On each desk was a physics textbook, a notebook, and a pen.

They were pushed into the chairs at the desks. Their hands and their feet were shackled with a short chain between the cuffs. It was designed for them to be able to use their hands and walk but not run or kick. The men then stepped back to the sides, as motionless and silent as ever. Sherlock sighed and leaned back in his chair. “I wasn’t fond of school,” he called out as Moriarty came in.

Moriarty was dressed in one of his impeccable suits and wearing a pair of wire-rimmed square glasses. He carried a book, some notebooks, and a metal ruler in his hands. He looked very much like a professor. “Good morning, class!” He beamed, ignoring Sherlock’s comment. “I’m Professor Moriarty. Can you tell me good morning?”

“You’ve got to be kidding me,” Sherlock muttered.
Moriarty put his book and notebooks down, strode over to Sherlock, and struck Sherlock hard on his left hand with the ruler. Sherlock hissed softly as the sting of metal hit his skin.

“Next time I’ll hit you somewhere else,” he said calmly. His expression shifted back into one of cheerfulness. “Good morning, class!”

Sherlock narrowed his eyes, but replied along with Molly: “Good morning, Professor Moriarty!”

“Good!” Moriarty smiled. He strode over to the desk, opened his book. “Class, please turn to page 137.”

Sherlock rubbed his hand for a few seconds before obeying. Molly got to page 137 before him and frowned. “Our solar system?”

“Oh, Dear Lord,” Sherlock sighed.

“But this is kid’s stuff! We learned this in primary school. Why on Earth would he want to teach us this?” Molly asked, bewildered.

“No talking in class without permission!” Moriarty said sternly from his desk. Then, strangely, he smiled at Molly. “You see, Molly, not everyone did learn this in primary school. Can you believe that? They didn't pay attention and forgot all about it.” He looked pointedly at Sherlock. “Some people, for example, don’t even know that the Earth revolves around the Sun.”

“What?” Molly exclaimed, looking at Sherlock.

“Oh, for God’s sake, did you not read John’s blog? Everyone else in England did,” Sherlock snapped. “No. I did not know that the Earth revolves around the Sun. I have better things to do with my hard drive than remember such unnecessary information.”

“Yet you knew I had gained 3 pounds,” Molly shot back.

“You said it was two-and-a-half,” Sherlock countered.

“It was.”

“No, it wasn’t.”

“And that information was necessary how, exactly?” Molly responded.

Their argument stopped when Moriarty clapped his hands loudly. “Children! Please. I said no talking without permission. But since that was so funny, I’ll let it slide just this once. Now. Let’s begin, shall we?”

He strode to the board, book balanced in his right hand as he took a piece of chalk in his left. He paused and looked over at them. “And Sherlock?”

“Yes, Professor Moriarty?” Sherlock replied tersely.

Moriarty smiled. “Pay attention. There will be a quiz this evening.”

Sherlock smiled spitefully at him.

Moriarty turned back to the chalkboard. “Now. Today we’re going to learn about the solar system and the major constellations.”
Three hours later, Sherlock wondered what Moriarty would do if he fell asleep in class. The man had been droning on and on about stellar objects and gas giants and Ursa Major. He showed no signs of stopping and quite frankly Sherlock had just about had enough.

He tore off a piece of paper from the bottom of his notes and scribbled on it: “Do ordinary people really have to learn this drivel?” Then he folded it up and chucked it onto Molly’s desk.

Molly stared at him in horror. She glanced at Moriarty but he hadn’t noticed. She quickly grabbed the note, read it, and frowned at him.

He raised his eyebrows as if to ask: “what?”

She furiously scribbled something under his question, then folded the note and threw it back. He opened it and read: “Thanks a lot for calling me ordinary.”

He frowned and wrote back: “I didn’t mean you. You’re a bit above ordinary people.”

This didn’t seem to please her any better, judging by her reply: “A BIT? So what, in the time of chimpanzees I was a monkey?”

“Oh would you stop taking everything I say personally!” Sherlock snapped. He realized he’d spoken aloud when Moriarty turned and looked at them.

“What’s this?” He inquired sweetly. “Passing notes, are we? Oh, my, you naughty children! Let’s have a look at that.”

He walked over and took the note from Sherlock. Moriarty read the note and grinned. “Oh, my. You have such a way with the girls, Sherlock! No wonder you’re still a virgin.”

Molly looked at Sherlock aghast, as if to ask: “does everyone know?”

“Why are you writing love notes in class?” Moriarty asked Sherlock.

“It’s not a love note.”

“That’s what all the little boys say.”

“And I wrote it because I’m bored,” Sherlock told him.

The change in Moriarty’s expression was subtle, but it was enough to send shivers down Molly’s back.

“Are you, now,” he said softly. He pursed his lips in thought, then smiled. It wasn’t a pleasant smile. It was the kind of smile that reminded Molly that they’d been locked up by a lunatic.

“Well. I do hope you won’t be too bored to study for your quiz tonight. Because it’s going to be very important. Part of the Final Problem, you might say.”

Sherlock returned his stare unflinchingly. Moriarty turned to Molly. “I don’t blame you for this, Molly. I know it must be terrible to be so desperately in love with a man who only uses you. Well. Used to, anyway. Maybe he’s changed, eh? I guess we’ll see.”

He turned and walked towards the desk. “Take your books and notes with you to study with. I’ll let you know when it’s quiz time.”
Moriarty turned back around and smiled again. “Class dismissed.”
Pass or Fail

Chapter Summary

Sherlock opens up to Molly, and Professor Moriarty quizzes Sherlock.

Chapter Notes

Thank you everyone who is reading and commenting on this! This is the longest chapter yet. I hope to update again in a week.

Back in their room, Molly put her things down on the table and turned to Sherlock. “Start reading.”

He stared at her. “Excuse me?”

“You heard me. I don’t have to be a genius consulting detective to have noticed that Moriarty was directing his comments about studying at you.”

“I am a genius consulting detective, and amazingly enough I noticed that as well, thank you,” Sherlock responded.

“I’m just saying he’s got something planned.”

“Thank you: that hadn’t occurred to me at all. Molly please leave the deducing to me: it’s really not your area.”

“Considering that Moriarty was supposed to be dead, I’m not sure that it’s yours, either,” Molly said, and then realized what she’d done. “Oh, God, Sherlock, I’m sorry…”

He was quiet for a long moment and stood staring at the floor. Molly swallowed hard. “Sherlock-”

“No,” he said, finally looking up at her. “You’re right. I should have suspected it was a trick. I was going to play a trick on him, after all. I should have checked his body.”

Molly had no answer to that. She glanced down, lost in thought. After a moment, Sherlock joined her at the table, sitting his book and notebook down beside hers. Molly reached out and took his hand. He looked at her quizzically.

“You’re not perfect,” she said softly. “No one is. But you knew what he was going to make you do. You’re alive. Everyone is alive because of that.”

He absently brushed his thumb over her hand. It made her breath catch. “And you,” he said softly. “Everyone, including me, is also alive because of you. Thank you for that, Molly.”

She shook her head. “You already thanked me.”

“I am of the opinion now that one can never be too grateful for one’s life,” Sherlock said. “So, again,
thank you, Molly Hooper.”

She nodded and pulled her hand away. He frowned. “Is something wrong?”

“No, we just need to get studying,” Molly answered, quickly going to the lavatory, hoping he had not noticed the rapid beating of her heart.

Sherlock didn’t say anything when she returned. They sat together at the table reading for a while. Sherlock occasionally glanced at Molly. She was trying very hard not to show it but he could pick up traces of… something. Suddenly he had a burst of… he didn’t want to call it insight. Or intuition. He didn’t work that way. But it came from somewhere, this… hunch. He’d think that bit over later.

“Molly?”

“Hmm?” She asked, turning a page.

“Come with me to the lavatory?”

She blinked. “Um…why?”

He raised his eyebrows. “Oh,” she said faintly. She got up and followed him.

Once inside he closed the door and looked her square in the eye. “You didn’t believe what he said, did you? That I don’t—” he hesitated—“don’t care a fucking thing about you? Or that I only use you?”

She looked down, but shook her head. “No.”

“He’s lying, you know. He didn’t see it because of the way I treated you. He was wrong about me, and he underestimated you. And he hates both those things. He’s only trying to hurt you and get back at me when he says what he does.”

“I know,” Molly said softly. She looked up at him. “Sherlock, why did you treat me so horribly?”

Sherlock’s gaze flicked uneasily away from her. “I treat everyone horribly, Molly.”

“Not John. And not Mrs. Hudson. Well, I know you say terrible things even to John at times but not like that. Not like how you’ve treated me. Why? Why did you do it?”

Sherlock looked torn between turning away and answering her. He glanced at her, looked away again, then looked back at her.

“I knew from the start that you… fancied me, I suppose is the word most people would use. I thought it was merely an infatuation. Even so, I couldn’t encourage it. I couldn’t let you think I could…” here he hesitated. When he continued his voice wasn’t quite so steady. “I have spent most of my life, the part after the drugs, married to my work. It had nothing to do with you, Molly. It had everything to do with me. Sentiment, feelings, always cloud judgment. They interfere with reason and with doing what is logical. I couldn’t afford to let myself be distracted by caring about someone.”

“I did take advantage of you. I used your attraction to me to make it easier for me to get body parts and work in the lab, and get your assistance. But even when I flirted with you, I never lied to you or misled you. I gave you exactly what I was capable of giving: the truth, presented in the best way possible.”

“As time passed, John became my friend. I started having feelings I hadn’t experienced since I was a
child. I didn’t like it, but I needed it. The truth is, Molly, that I have avoided feelings because I knew that once that door opened, I could never fully close it again.”

He sighed, and one hand reached up to brush two fingers over her cheek. “At the Christmas party… I was particularly cruel. I thought if I was horrible enough, you’d want to push me away: you’d forget about how you felt. I was also angry. I was distracted by emotion and I took it out on you. I didn’t realize until then that it was more than just infatuation: that you are, in fact, in love with me.” He slowly withdrew his hand. “I realized too late I’d gone too far, no matter how good my intentions were. And there was some good in them, Molly. But what I hadn’t counted on was that in hurting you, I hurt myself.”

He looked away. “You have always been there for me, Molly. Even when I didn’t deserve any of it. Your love, your trust, your time, your devotion. You’re never hesitated, never given up on me. You’ve believed in me and helped me time and time again. And I never told you that you’ve always counted and that I’ve always trusted you, until that night. Not because it hadn’t always been true. But because it was.”

He drew a deep breath and looked back at her again. “So. The answer to your question, Molly, is I treated you so horribly because I couldn’t let myself do anything else. The more I began to realize that I could come undone, the more important it became not to let it happen. And I’m sorry. Sorry for hurting you. Sorry for everything you went through with the Fall, and for everything we’re going to go through now.”

Molly felt her eyes fill up with tears. The warm salty drops slid down her face like rain. Sherlock’s eyes darkened.

He brushed his thumbs over her cheeks, gently wiping the tears away. When she finally stopped crying he leaned down and pressed a soft, brief kiss to her lips.

“You do count, Molly,” he said softly. “Never forget that.”

Molly wiped at her face. “Do you kiss everyone who counts?” She joked feebly as she looked up at him.

He wiped her face again. “No,” he whispered.

Molly took a ragged breath. “Thank you, Sherlock. For telling me.”

He slowly lowered his hands. “You deserved to know.”

Molly nodded. “Well. We’d best get back to it.”

Without another word she turned and opened the door, and he followed her out.

Usually it was Molly who followed him.

They spent the next few hours reading. Sherlock had studied the position of the sun and moon from their window and could tell the time fairly accurately. He’d been marking the days in a book. It was important to him to know these things, now. So he’d made a calendar.

He focused on memorizing as many of the facts in the book as he could. Dull, horribly dull. But he had no idea what this quiz of Moriarty’s would encompass.

They were given plenty of water and tea, and a good lunch and dinner. It was, by Sherlock’s estimation, about eleven at night when Moriarty came over the speakers.
“Good evening, class!”

Sherlock sighed, but went along with it. “Good evening, Professor Moriarty!”

“It’s time for your quiz,” Moriarty said. “So get ready to leave in 5 minutes!”

Molly watched as they went through the routine of Sherlock cuffing her and then himself. “Why do you always do that?” She asked.

“Do what?” He replied absently as he snapped the second cuff onto his wrist, turning his hands around to examine the cuffs yet again.

“Put my cuffs on me and then cuff yourself.”

He glanced at her. “Do you want to cuff yourself?”

“No really.”

“I didn’t think so.”

Once again they were taken to the classroom, except now it was different. Two chains with wide metal bars had been added about 4 meters away from the front of the chalkboard. Sherlock was taken to one; Molly the other. Sherlock’s cuffed hands were raised and slipped over the bar, then attached to a clasp which was then reattached to the chain. He frowned as Molly was released from her cuffs.

“What are you doing?”

“Oh, didn’t I tell you?” Moriarty asked as he walked in. In one hand he held a notebook: in the other, a whip. “Molly’s going to help me with the quiz. You always were a teacher’s pet in school, weren’t you, Molly?”

“Leave her out of this!” Sherlock snapped, pulling on his chain. Moriarty smiled.

“No can do, honey. Gentlemen?”

Molly struggled not to panic as one man held her and another man began to pull up her shirt. “What are you doing?” She asked.

“Well you can’t help me dressed like that. And by “like that,” I mean wearing those clothes.”

“What?” She screamed. She struggled but her shirt and bra were removed from her while Sherlock shouted for them to stop.

“Relax, you can keep the rest on,” Moriarty said with a yawn. Molly, naked from the waist up, was then cuffed and attached to the chain like Sherlock was. Sherlock was torn: he didn’t want to look at Molly, half-naked and afraid, out of respect for her. But he also wanted to know what was being done to her. In the end his concern won out as Moriarty walked over to her, now holding the whip in both hands.

Molly shivered as he pressed himself against her back. “You’re looking well for your age, Molly, did you know that?” He slid the whip in front of her, slowly rubbing the black leather against her small, rounded breasts. Her nipples hardened involuntarily from the stimulation and Moriarty chuckled. “Lovely little breasts you have. Not that I ever got to see them like this. What about you, Sherlock?”

“Leave her out of this,” Sherlock repeated angrily.

“Oh, of course you haven’t seen them like this,” Moriarty chuckled. “How silly of me! And what a
lovely back you have, Molly,” he continued, moving his hands to her back and running them slowly up and down. “Soft, warm skin and what adorable freckles on your shoulder blades. Well. Let’s hope there’s not too much damage, shall we?”

Sherlock’s eyes raged. “Don’t. I’m the one you want to test.”

“Now Sherlock, you know that no one likes to feel left out!” Moriarty chided. He smiled. “Here’s the drill, kids. I ask Sherlock a question. He gets it right: we move on. He gets it wrong: Molly takes a licking. Any questions?”

“Let her go. Whip me instead,” Sherlock said.

“That won’t be nearly as much… incentive for you to do well,” Moriarty said.

“Let her go!” Sherlock shouted.

“Not happening. Now shut up or I’ll give her a few warning lashes.”

“How many questions are there?” Sherlock asked desperately.

“Twenty.”

Sherlock pulled futilely on his restraints. Moriarty smiled again and picked up the notebook. “All right. First question. What are the four terrestrial planets?”

Sherlock went running through his mind palace. “Mercury, Venus, Earth, and Mars.”

“Good!” Moriarty exclaimed. “Next question. True or false. The solar wind is a flow of plasma from the sun.”

“True.”

“Very good!” Next question.”

Sherlock made it to question five before Moriarty shook his head and sighed. “No, sorry. The correct answer was the heliopause!” He put the notebook down and moved behind Molly. Molly closed her eyes tight.

“No!”

But Sherlock’s denial did no good.

Moriarty lashed out with the whip twice, once on each side of her back. Molly jerked forward and bit her bit hard to keep from screaming. It hurt. Her back felt raw and burnt where the whip had cut into it. Moriarty remained impassive as he whipped her, studying her face for a moment before returning to the desk. “Next question.”

By the time they got to the last question, Molly had been whipped four times. Each time she’d been hit twice. Moriarty knew what he was doing: he’d laid out a pattern on her back that left her entire back in agony. He’d whipped her a little harder each time, and by the final round Molly had drawn blood from her lip where she’d bitten it so hard. She could feel the bruises on her back spreading out on her skin and taste the metallic tang of her blood in her mouth. She struggled to focus on anything other than the pain.

“Last question. What are Kepler’s laws of planetary motion?”
Sherlock frowned. Kepler’s laws. He knew them. He just had to remember.

“Well?”

“A moment!” Sherlock snapped. He went running through his mind palace again, frantically searching for the information that would stop Molly from receiving yet another whipping.

“Time’s almost up, Sherlock, tick tock,” Moriarty chanted.

Sherlock snarled at him. Almost there. Almost…

“Oops!”

“No!” Sherlock shouted desperately. “The orbit of every planet is an ellipse with the Sun at one of the two foci.”

“And?” Moriarty asked, moving to stand behind Molly, casually stroking the whip.

“A line joining a planet and the Sun sweeps out equal areas during equal intervals of time.”

“Very good, and the last one?” Moriarty asked, licking a path along Molly’s bruises. She whimpered.

Sherlock drew a deep breath, frowning. He couldn’t lose now. Not with Molly’s back a beaten mess and her lip bloody. He forced his mind to be still while he searched for the final piece of information. When he found it he almost laughed. “The square of the orbital period of a planet is directly proportional to the cube of the semi-major axis of its orbit!” he exclaimed, eyes blazing with triumph.

Moriarty smiled. “Excellent! Congratulations, Sherlock. You passed the first part.”

Sherlock’s face fell. “The first part?”

“Yes, and now it’s time for the last part!” Moriarty headed for the door, whip and notebook in hand. “Bring them up,” he ordered as he left.

* * * * * * * * *

They were taken to the elevator, hands once again cuffed in front of them. One floor up and the elevator opened to a heavy metal door that opened to the roof.

Sherlock was surprised. A quick glance confirmed what he thought: the floor they were kept on was the ground floor. Everything below them was underground. And only one level above, the roof. A single halogen lamp lit the immediate area where they were led. There were no buildings around them as far as he could see.

Molly was looking around too. Suddenly she went still and whispered: “Sherlock. Look up.”

He did. Even with the glare of the lamp he could see the sky bright and clear. Millions of stars.

Stars forming constellations.

“Off we go, then!” Moriarty said. Two men held Sherlock in a death grip while two others grabbed Molly. They pushed her over to the right-hand edge of the building. As Sherlock watched, each of them grabbed an arm and held Molly over the side.

She screamed in terror.
“You said you weren’t going to kill either of us!” Sherlock shouted furiously at Moriarty. He kicked hard at a man who grabbed at his ankles to shackle them and twisted in his captor’s grasps.

“I’m not killing her,” Moriarty snapped. “Stop being stupid. We aren’t up high enough for it to kill her. It would just make life unpleasant for her for awhile. Now get hold of yourself or they’ll chuck her now.”

Sherlock went still, eyes blazing in hatred. His legs were shackled. He looked over at Molly, dangling helplessly, shaking and so pale she looked dead. He remembered falling from the roof at Bart’s. The sun, the rush of the wind, the spinning vertigo, falling out of control and the ground rushing up to meet him fast, too fast. This was different. He’d had Molly. Molly didn’t have someone waiting at the bottom to save her. He had to save her from up here.

He turned to face Moriarty. “Let’s begin, shall we?”

Moriarty picked up a long white plastic pointer. “Name that constellation,” he said, indicating one.

“Gemini,” Sherlock replied.

“And that one?”

“Canis Major.”

“Next?”

“Orion.”

It went on and on, Moriarty pointing at seemingly everything in the sky. Every time Sherlock got it right.

Finally Moriarty lowered the pointer and smiled. “Well done, Sherlock. A perfect score.”

Sherlock sighed in relief.

“Bring her back,” he ordered. Molly was lifted from the edge where she’d spent the past 5 minutes wondering if this was the second she would know how it felt to fall. She trusted Sherlock but it was still one of the most terrifying things she’d ever experienced. She felt dizzy and sick and her back still hurt and so did her lip. She stumbled a bit as she was led over to Sherlock and Moriarty.

“Poor Molly,” Moriarty tisked. “You’ve had a raw deal today, haven’t you, dear? Well Professor Moriarty has a special reward for his pet.” He nodded at his men.

Molly’s feet were shackled and then her hands were uncuffed. The men holding Sherlock moved aside so her arms could be forced around his waist and her hands cuffed again. She cried out as Sherlock’s cuffed hands made contact with her back. He moved closer to her and extended his arms away from her to avoid hurting her further.

“You kids can have a little quiet time to stargaze together,” Moriarty said with a smile. “We’ll be back to get you in 15 minutes.” One of the men opened the door as Moriarty switched off the lamp. They all disappeared, leaving Sherlock and Molly alone in the dark.

Molly’s knees buckled and she would have fallen were Sherlock not holding her up. He pulled her closer. “Lean on me, Molly,” he murmured to her. She did as he said, shaking violently as everything caught up to her at once all over again.
“Deep breaths,” he said softly, and inhaled and exhaled slowly. She followed suit, breathing in tandem with him. “Good,” he said. “Keep it up.”

Molly tipped her head up to look at the sky. Sherlock was warm and solid against her, supporting her weight, breathing slower than he normally would to help her calm down. The wind was cold on her skin and without thinking she buried her face against Sherlock’s neck.

She realized what she’d done and started to move, saying “sorry,” when his voice stopped her.

“You’ve had a shock. You should warm up.”

Molly’s mind went blank. “Oh,” she said quietly. So that’s how it was, then. She didn’t really care at that point why he was doing it. She’d take whatever he wanted to give her.

She cuddled close to him, noticing for some insane reason how neatly her head tucked into the curve of his neck. “You realize if we keep doing this people will talk,” she joked.

It made him think of John, and his lips twitched in an echo of a sad smile. “People do little else.”

They stood in silence together, Molly’s heartbeat slowing, Sherlock looking up into the sky, his eyes wide open to the dark.
Molly awoke early that morning. She’d dreamt that she and Sherlock were standing at a produce stall and he was explaining to her that the oranges had diamonds hidden in them as part of a smuggling operation. He split one open and dozens of tiny diamonds came flying out and landed in her hair. Sherlock was picking them out of her hair and she’d never realized before that he had a tattoo of an owl on his left palm. She was about to ask him why when Lestrade came running up and said Sherlock was urgently needed to help solve a case involving some missing cellos.

Molly groaned softly when she woke. What an odd dream that had been.

It was then that she noticed something was amiss. The room, which had been its usual temperature when they went to bed, seemed colder. She pulled the duvet down and immediately yanked it back up. It was colder. Much colder. She didn’t want to leave the bed but her body told her otherwise.

It felt even worse as she came out of the lavatory. She groaned again, louder this time, as she padded back to the bed.

Sherlock turned over and stared at her. “Molly, are you all right?” Then he frowned. “It’s colder in here. By about 10 degrees. What’s going on?” He asked loudly.

“Good morning!” Moriarty said cheerfully. “Some like it hot, and some like it cold. Today you two will be liking it cold.”

“I don’t like it cold,” Sherlock said, still frowning.
“No? Oh, well. I’m studying your reactions to the cold today. I’ll be turning it down another 5 degrees or so later on, so you might want to take that into consideration.”

“Anything else we need to take into “consideration” today?” Sherlock asked acerbically.

“Today? Not really. Tonight? Yes. I’ll be conducting another test later. It’s a surprise, though. For now, why don’t you kids have a cozy lie-in? You don’t have a train to catch, after all.”

Sherlock scowled and jumped out of the bed. “Is that an order?” He asked.

“Just a suggestion,” Moriarty said.

“Your ‘suggestions’ are usually orders,” Sherlock said sourly.

“Funny how that works, isn’t it? I’ll be in touch!”

Sherlock’s scowl deepened. “Ridiculous. There are plenty of studies on how the human body reacts to temperature changes.”

“Yes, but not our bodies,” Molly pointed out as she curled up tighter under the covers.

Sherlock began to pace. “He knows I dislike the cold. He’s only doing it to annoy me.”

“Is that a surprise?” Molly asked, and Sherlock shot her a withering glance.

“Don’t you start as well, Molly,” he said. He paced a few more times before he returned to the bed. He threw himself back into it with a loud, indignant huff, pulling at the duvet. “Have you never heard of sharing, Molly?”

“I am sharing. Stop trying to take my part and stop letting in cold air,” Molly snapped, clenching her fingers tightly around the top of the duvet.
“I could if you’d let me have more than just the edge,” Sherlock retorted.

“Oh, for God’s sake, would you stop?” Molly said.

Sherlock pulled the covers up to his chin and glared. “Hmph.”

Molly sighed. This was going to be a lovely morning.

Not even a minute later Sherlock exhaled loudly in exasperation.

“What’s wrong now?” She asked.

“Bored,” he answered moodily.

Of course he was. Sherlock wasn’t the sort of man who had a lie-in.

“You could read,” Molly suggested.

“Not in the mood to read.”

“We could talk.”

“Not in the mood for that, either.”

“Then I don’t know what to tell you. I’m going to get some more sleep,” Molly replied, stretching and shivering slightly as her left foot moved out from under the duvet.

He got up and went to the lavatory. Molly saw him suppress a shiver as he returned. It already felt colder than it had 10 minutes ago. She wasn’t sure if it was because of what Moriarty had said or if
he’d actually lowered it another notch, though.

Sherlock frowned and looked up at the vent. “He’s blowing cold air in.”

So not her imagination, then. She saw him shiver again. He wore his Belstaff coat even in warm weather. Molly had figured out long ago he didn’t have a high tolerance for the cold, but she hadn’t realized just how much it affected him until now.

“Sherlock, come back to bed and get warmed up,” Molly said, and he scowled again.

“I am considering standing here to see how cold he’s willing to get it in here if I don’t,” Sherlock said.

“Sherlock that’s childish. You’ll make him freeze us both,” Molly said angrily.

“So?” He asked, drawing a deep breath through his nose.

“So I don’t feel like suffering for the sake of your ego! I’ve done that enough over the years. Now stop this and get back in bed!” Molly snapped.

He looked at her in surprise. He’d never heard her use quite that tone of voice with him before. He hesitated, then returned to the bed and drew the duvet back up. He lay on his back, looking at the ceiling for a long moment. Then he sighed and turned to face her.

“Turn over, Molly.”

“What? Why?” She asked, confused.

“Because I cannot spoon with you properly if you don’t,” he said.

He’d said “spoon” in the same tone some people would say “herpes.” Molly frowned. “Spoon with me? What do you want to do that for?”
“Because that’s what he wants. And the sooner he gets it, the sooner he will hopefully end this little "experiment" he’s doing right now,” Sherlock said.

“I don’t understand,” Molly said.

“He doesn’t care about making us cold. That’s not the real point of this. He cares about making us uncomfortable. It’s like everything else with him. It’s a means to an end.”

“Then why not just tell us to do it? Why be so elaborate and indirect?”

“Because that’s not his style. He’d rather set up little puzzles for me to figure out and then make me do what he wants. And I dislike the notion of freezing more than I dislike the notion of spooning. Now turn over.”

Molly sighed and obliged. Sherlock pressed himself against her back. He folded his left arm under his pillow and his right arm came around her waist. Molly was intensely aware of him against her as their combined body heat began to warm them. She settled closer to him as she felt him relax, and he sighed quietly.

“A cozy lie-in,” Molly murmured.

“Yes.”

“You know what spooning is.”

“I’m a virgin, Molly, not an idiot,” Sherlock said dryly.

“Right.” She yawned.

“You don’t sound convinced.”
“Sherlock?”

“Yes?”

“I’m trying to sleep.”

He hadn’t told Molly the other part: that something had been added to the air. She hadn’t even noticed that the sliding glass pane of their window had been closed. He’d sniffed at the vent carefully but couldn’t identify it. He didn’t need to, strictly speaking, to know it was an airborne sedative. At that point he’d decided that he didn’t feel like continuing their little poker game and joined Molly in the bed again.

Were these different circumstances, he supposed being curled up to Molly could be… pleasant. As they were not, he could only say that in one sense, it was better than being cold.

He’d been tempted to keep standing there until he fell: to make Moriarty have to work harder for his prize. But Molly would have stayed angry and he didn’t want to have to deal with that.

He was getting drowsy. It wouldn’t be long. His arm around Molly tightened a little, protectively, his brain stubbornly trying to figure out exactly what Moriarty’s end game was even as his body shut down and he lost himself in sleep.

When Sherlock awoke, he immediately knew four things.

1. It was early evening. Around 7 p.m. by his estimation.
2. The room was warm again.
3. The air was clear. A glance up showed that the window glass was open again, leaving only the bars.
4. Molly was still asleep.

He withdrew his arm and shook her. “Molly. Wake up, Molly.”

She made an inarticulate sound that he knew was protest. He ignored it and shook her harder.
“Molly. Wake up. We’ve slept for nearly 11 hours.”

“What?” Molly groaned. She opened her eyes to see Sherlock peering down at her. “How the hell did that happen?”

“Because Moriarty used an airborne sedative.” Satisfied that Molly was mostly awake and alert, Sherlock got up and stretched.

Molly sat up and looked around. Then she looked at Sherlock. “Did you know that earlier?”

He hesitated. “Yes,” he said after a few seconds pause.

Molly stared at him in confusion and dismay. “Why didn’t you tell me?” She asked.

“You would have gotten upset,” Sherlock replied as he walked toward the lavatory.

“Whereas I’m not the least bit upset now,” Molly said angrily. She got up and frowned at him.

“There was nothing you could do about it. I saw no need to mention it. It wasn’t as though I was keeping some big secret from you, Molly.”

She looked at him in a way that made him uneasy. “Are you?”

“Am I what?”

“Keeping some big secret from me,” Molly said.

“About all this? No.” He looked directly at her and didn’t hesitate to answer. “I wouldn’t do that.”

“Why not? You’ve done it to people before,” Molly said.
His gaze was unreadable. “That was then. This is now.” And he went into the lavatory. She heard the shower start.

When he came out, wrapped only in a towel, Molly averted her eyes as she grabbed her clothes and went to take a shower herself. “You could cover up a bit more,” she muttered.

He stopped and looked at her. “Why?” His voice was curious.

“Because you keep getting… naked in front of me!” Molly exclaimed.

He tilted his head and studied her. “Is there something about my body that upsets you?”

Yes, it’s bloody magnificent and it’s too much for me to stand under these circumstances, Molly wanted to say. She shook her head instead. “It’s just…indecent,” she said, knowing full well how lame it sounded but unable to tell him the truth.

“The body is transport, Molly. And I didn’t think you and I needed to stand on formal grounds, considering everything we’ve been through together,” Sherlock told her. His eyes narrowed. “Was I wrong?”

“You know what, Sherlock? Go around naked for all I care,” Molly said angrily, glowering at him. How could he be so clever and so bloody stupid at the same time?

He blinked. “That seems a bit extreme, don’t you think?”

Molly groaned and slammed the lavatory door behind her.

When she came out she discovered that dinner had arrived. Only it wasn’t the usual thing. There was now a white linen tablecloth and matching napkins on the table and some fresh-cut lilies in a carnival-glass vase. The table settings were antique silver and two small covered dishes sat at their chairs. A carafe of water sat between crystal water goblets. It was elegant and lovely and made her suspicious.
“What’s all this, then?” She asked Sherlock.

He shrugged. “All he said is dinner is served.”

“You don’t know what he’s doing?”

“Molly even I cannot fully understand the workings of the mind of a madman,” Sherlock said. “Now sit down so we can eat.”

She did, lifting the cover from her dish. Fillet mignon, grilled asparagus, and boiled potatoes were artfully arranged on a bone china plate. A small dish of English Mustard sat to the side. Her eyes widened.

Sherlock glanced at her food. “Medium rare. Just the way you like it.”

His food was the same as hers, except his steak was well done. Sherlock turned on some classical music and they ate in relative silence.

The food was excellent. Molly wished she knew what the point was, though. She knew there had to be one. Moriarty didn’t make a fuss about something unless he had an ulterior motive.

Ten minutes after they’d finished, when Sherlock went pale, ran to the lavatory, fell to his knees and was sick all over the floor before he could get to the toilet, she had her answer.
Molly grabbed a flannel, turned on the hot water, ran the cloth under the tap, and knelt beside him on the floor. He rasped and heaved one more time as she did, still on his hands and knees, trembling slightly, his already pale skin an even whiter shade. She gently tipped his face up and looked him over quickly and clinically. She might work on the dead for Bart’s, but that didn’t mean she didn’t know anything about the living.

His eyes were febrile, and he was sweating. His temperature seemed up just a bit as well. He had sick on his face and it had splattered onto his shirt. He reeked of it and the entire scene of food and bile on the floor and a shaking, sweating Sherlock would’ve made most people flinch or worse.

Molly Hooper wasn’t most people. She assessed all this in a few seconds. Then she gently began cleaning his face.

He didn’t protest. He sank to his knees and let her tend to him. The only sounds for the next few minutes were his ragged breathing and Molly grabbing a fresh flannel and getting it wet to clean him off more.

“Poisoned,” she said angrily. “That fucking bastard poisoned you.” She finished with his face and neck and began to unbutton his shirt.

For once, Sherlock wasn’t sarcastic. Likely he didn’t have the energy for it. “Probably something some of his scientists has come up with. And he decided to show off the results.”

“Big of him,” Molly said, her fury threatening to bubble over. She pushed it down with difficulty. Sherlock needed her help and she needed to focus solely on him.

She finished unbuttoning his shirt, peeling it off of him quickly and tossing it aside. Some of the sick had trickled down onto his chest and she wiped that off as well, watching in alarm as his shaking increased. She felt his forehead and frowned. “Your temperature has gone up by two degrees in less than 10 minutes. At this rate you’ll be at risk for brain damage in less than an hour.”
He looked as though he would get sick again. Few things could frighten Sherlock like the danger of something being wrong with his mind. “I thought that fevers didn’t go that high.”

“Normally, no. Infection-related fevers stay around 40 degrees Celsius. But this is some sort of poison and I have no idea how high it could take your temperature.” Molly bit her lower lip, thinking. “I need to give you a lukewarm bath. I doubt Moriarty will want to let you have meds since he’s using you for a test.” She spat the last word out.

Sherlock watched her as she moved to the tub, turning on the taps and adjusting the water to whatever she deemed the proper temperature. Then she turned back to him and asked: “Can you stand?”

He nodded, and she helped him to stand up. He swayed slightly and she braced him against a wall for support, then knelt and removed his socks and reached for his belt buckle.

Sherlock remained silent, watching her undo his trousers and pull them down, then do the same thing to his pants. She helped him pull them off and flung them as far away from the toilet as she could. She was all business about it, looking at him without actually looking, all her attention focused on the task at hand. Normally nakedness didn’t bother him: the body was only transport for the mind, after all. Perhaps it was his weakened condition and his rising temperature, but for some reason he…felt… odd having Molly undress him, being naked before her. It wasn’t embarrassment over his body: it wasn’t even strictly to do with it being Molly. He frowned slightly, searching his thoughts. It was…

Oh.

Shame. He felt ashamed for being weak, even though it wasn’t his doing. And…afraid. Afraid because not killing them still left an awfully large amount of territory for Moriarty to explore. Sherlock had no idea if it could include permanently damaging his mind. He’d like to think not: he’d not make a good challenge for him if that happened and Moriarty wanted to have a good distraction more than anything. But there was no real telling what was in that madman’s head, and that was truly alarming.

His thoughts were interrupted by Molly saying his name. From the inflection in her tone, she was repeating it. “Yes?”

“I said, are you ready?”

“Yes,” he replied. She wrapped an arm around him and helped him to carefully settle into the tub. The water was, indeed, perfectly lukewarm. It was only when she turned the taps off that he thought to ask her: “why not a cold bath? Why lukewarm?”

“A cold bath would make you shiver and raise your core temperature instead of lowering it,” Molly replied. She grabbed yet another clean flannel and knelt beside him at the tub, wetting it and squeezing water down his chest and stomach before gently rubbing the flannel over his skin. He settled deeper into the tub and closed his eyes as she repeated her actions, wrinkling his nose. “Horrible, isn’t it? The odor of vomit. It would disgust most people.” His eyes snapped open and met hers. “You’re not disgusted.”

She laughed. “It doesn’t smell good, Sherlock, but no. I’m not. Have you forgotten what I do for a living?” She asked.

He shook his head. “No, I just-” he broke off abruptly and paled again. “The bin,” he gasped.
Molly barely had time to grab it and shove it under his face before Sherlock wretched and heaved again, vomiting up more food and bile. Molly examined the bile. “Normal color, and no blood. That’s good,” she said, and Sherlock scowled.

“Yes. It’s lovely how normal my vomit is. Really, Molly-” he broke off again as another heave claimed him.

He repeated it two more times, then it subsided. Molly got him two tissues and ran some cold water into a cup, bringing them along with an empty cup over to him. She held a tissue up to his nose. “Blow,” she said firmly.

He gave her a withering glance but obeyed. He repeated his actions with the second tissue and she dropped them in the bin. She handed him the cup with water. “Rinse.”

She must have imagined that his cheeks colored slightly. Sherlock Holmes didn’t get embarrassed. He complied again without complaint, swishing the water around to rid himself of the sick before spitting it into the empty cup she held out. When he was finished she dumped the contents down the sink and returned to the tub, letting some of the cooling water out and adding more lukewarm water.

“Molly?”

She sighed, wondering what sort of caustic comment he was going to make now. “Yes, Sherlock?”

“Thank you,” he said quietly.

Her hands stilled for a second on his chest. Then she simply nodded and continued sponging him off, not certain of what to say. She was afraid once she started talking she’d ramble and she didn’t want that. It broke her heart to see him like this, sick and weak and vulnerable. And considering that so far she’d received more of a raw deal than him, that said a lot about how much she loved him. That she would feel bad for him but not for herself.

Molly didn’t usually do that, though. Feel bad for herself. She knew that most everything that happened to her was by her choice. Medical school, pathology, post mortems. Even Sherlock was a choice. Molly hadn’t ever really tried to get over him, and she knew that it was no one’s fault but hers. Every time she started she’d look in his eyes, look at that face, and she lost all desire to rid herself of her feelings, despite how much pain they caused her. And they caused her a lot of pain. Exquisite, searing pain that felt like someone had carved his initials into her heart with a knife made of flame.

But it was her pain. And she guarded it and Sherlock with the vigilance of a dragon guarding a hoard of treasure.

Although, seeing him with sick all over him had put a damper on the effect he normally had on her, that was for certain.

She felt his forehead. “Temperature is normal again,” she told him. “Let’s get you to bed.”

He scowled again. “I’ve been to bed. I was in bed nearly 11 hours. I have had enough of being in bed.”

“Fine. Then you can wrap up and we’ll sit on the sofa,” Molly said, rolling her eyes.

He was obviously still weak. Molly made a mental note to give him water to drink once she had him settled, then helped him out of the tub and dried him off. Sherlock wanted to brush his teeth and rinse so Molly patiently stood by while he leaned against the sink and did just that. He was still shivering
even without an elevated temperature. She got his dressing gown for him because he told her he didn’t want clothes. He put it on without a fuss and they left to go back into the main room. The dinner music had ended and Molly wasn’t sure if the silence was peaceful or unnerving.

No sooner than she had got him on the sofa and brought a blanket than they heard Moriarty’s familiar cheery voice. “Oh, dear, Sherlock: you seem a bit under the weather. How are you feeling?”

“Delightful. What the devil did you give me?” Sherlock asked coldly.

“Just a little something my boys are working on in the lab. Looks like Molly is taking such good care of you. So sweet of her. Tell me, Molly: how does it feel to see him like this, all sick and weak? Does it disgust you? Make you pity him? Or do you secretly enjoy him getting knocked down a few pegs and needing your help?”

“No I don’t enjoy it! Are you mad?” Molly exclaimed in disbelief.

“Not even a little? What do you think, Sherlock? Does Molly like you being at her mercy? Needing her?”

Sherlock looked up at the camera. “No. Unlike you, Molly helps people because she cares about them. Not simply to get something back.”

“Aww. Saint Molly. Well you know what they say about trying the patience of a saint… and you certainly do, Sherlock. Would you like to know a secret?”

“Oh, do tell,” Sherlock said acidly.

“One day, you’re going to repay Molly for all her kindness to you. In a way you can’t even begin to conceive. I want that day so badly I can taste it. In the meantime, we’ll just let Molly do what she does so well. You might want to get another bin, Molly: he’s probably not finished yet. His temperature might go up again too, but probably only once. One more thing: you’ll be getting cold soon, Sherlock. But don’t worry. Molly will be glad to keep you warm, I’m sure. I’ll send some liquids up so you can rehydrate. Get well soon!”

Molly sighed and looked at Sherlock. “OK. One thing at a time.” She brought a bin over from near the desk, then went over to the door.

A few minutes later a stream of items were pushed through the small swinging door at the bottom. More clean towels and flannels. A bottle of orange juice and two glasses. A carafe of ice water. Three new toothbrushes. Some antiseptic cleaner in a spray bottle, latex gloves, replacement liners for the rubbish bins, and a huge empty rubbish bag. Molly first poured Sherlock some water, then sat the water, juice, and other glass on the table. She carried everything else into the bathroom and donned the gloves, then cleaned the floor and put everything that had sick on it into the big empty rubbish bag. When everything was back to normal she removed the gloves and tossed them into the bag as well, then thoroughly washed her hands. Finally she put a new toothbrush out for Sherlock and stowed the others away, then returned to the other room.

Sherlock had finished two glasses of water and was wrapped up tightly in the blanket, shivering so hard it looked as though his teeth would break. “Sherlock! Why didn’t you call for me!” Molly exclaimed.

“You had enough to do,” he said in between his teeth chattering. “You’ve done enough. I didn’t want to be a burden again.”
“You’re not a burden,” Molly said softly. The sofa was big enough for two and she stretched out on it, tugging Sherlock against her and covering them both with the blanket before wrapping her arms around him. He hesitated, then rested his head below her shoulder and bent one arm over her stomach, his hand resting over her heart.

“Your heartbeat is so strong,” he said, sounding surprised.

Molly smiled. “I’m not as fragile as I seem.”

“No,” Sherlock said softly. “You’re not.”

He shifted against her so that his head was further down, resting between her breasts, his ear next to his hand. Molly closed her eyes, tired even though they’d just slept for ages, lulled by his soft, steady breathing as he listened in seeming fascination to the beating of her heart.
“Give it to me.”

“No.”

“Molly.” Molly only stared at him defiantly.

“No. You know why he did it. Do you really want it that badly?”

“Yes!” Sherlock snapped.

“You know it’s not real. He’s put this in your head. Trying to tempt you. You’d be letting him win. Is that really what you want?”

“Molly, I need it. Give it to me.”

“No. I’m not doing it.”

“Give it to me,” Sherlock repeated, a desperate edge to his voice.

Molly glared.

“Please?” He asked.

“Sherlock…”

“Please, Molly.”

Molly rose and sighed. She moved to the opposite side of the room and stood looking up at the window, cursing Sherlock and Moriarty both for this little “experiment.”

It had started out so easily as few days ago. Moriarty had brought them outside, let them take a walk with him and a dozen of his men. The scenery was beautiful: a huge field and there were trees in the distance. All during the walk, one man after another had smoked a cigarette. Sherlock had become
edgy. On the way back him, Moriarty himself took a few drags off a cigarette. Only a few. “I quit ages ago,” he said smugly. “Only indulge now on special occasions. And this is a special occasion, isn’t it, lambchop?” He asked, grinning at Sherlock.

Sherlock glared at him. Moriarty only laughed and blew smoke at Sherlock’s face before putting his cigarette out. Molly stared at Moriarty angrily. He grinned at her as well.

For the next few days, every time they left their room something to do with cigarettes followed them. A magazine in the lab (Moriarty gleefully referred to the lab as “the house of fun”) was turned to a cigarette ad. Someone’s clothes would smell faintly of smoke. Finally Molly couldn’t stand it. “What the hell are you doing?” She demanded.

“Oh, right. You really hate them, don’t you?” Moriarty mused. “Well. That will make things more interesting.”

The previous day Moriarty had held a cigarette in front of Sherlock, saying: “I know you want one. The rush of the nicotine. The way it sweeps up into your mind, making everything razor sharp. The focus it gives you. You’ve missed it, I know. So tomorrow we’re going to play a game.”

“What sort of game?” Sherlock asked, trying not to let his body respond to the prospect of a cigarette.

“I’m going to give Molly a cigarette. And you can have it, you can smoke the entire thing with no repercussions from me. But there’s a catch. Molly has to give it to you. You can’t take it from her. You have to convince her to let you have it. That’s the challenge. Have fun.”

“Why is that such a challenge?” Sherlock asked.

Moriarty’s eyes widened. “You don’t know? But then, why would you? You don’t bother to see anything that doesn’t let you show off. Molly: tell Sherlock what killed your dad.”

Molly’s fists, which had been clenched during the entire conversation, trembled. “Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. From smoking.”

“Shame,” Moriarty sighed. “I never got to meet him. All because of smoking.”

Molly launched herself before she could control the urge. “You miserable rotten bastard-”

Moriarty’s men grabbed her before she reached him. “Whoa, easy there, wildcat! So yes, Sherlock. That’s why it will be a challenge. Good luck with that.”

Now Sherlock had 6 hours to convince her to let him have the cigarette. Molly knew he might as well have 100 hours. It wasn’t happening.

Sherlock walked over and stood beside her. “Molly, I understand that it killed your father, but-”

“Yes it did! And I hate cigarettes! But it’s not just about my dad, Sherlock!” She exclaimed angrily. “It’s about you and giving in to him! How do you think I would feel, knowing I let you do that? How do you think I’d feel about you if you did it?”

Sherlock blinked. “But I’d be doing it, not you.”

“I’d be angry at myself. And at you. You’re better than that, Sherlock.”

At that moment, Sherlock did not feel better than that. The addiction had come roaring back with the
lure of a cigarette, and even 5 minutes of nicotine-induced euphoria would be better than none. Or so the addict in him was whispering.

Of course he could take it from her. But even in his nicotine fever he knew that Molly would likely pay the price for that, and he-no. That was not going to happen. He was many things, but that would be monstrous and he was no monster. Which meant he did have to talk her into it.

He sighed. “I should be, but right now I’m not, Molly.”

“That’s the addiction talking,” Molly said.

“Yes. And it’s speaking very loudly.”

“It will shut up eventually.”

Sherlock exhaled slowly. “All right. Name your price.”

Molly turned to look at him. She couldn’t have heard him right. “What?”

“Name your price. You have something I want. I shouldn’t want it, but I do. Surely there’s something I could offer you in exchange?”

“What could you offer me that would make me give you a cigarette from Moriarty?” Molly asked.

He stepped a little closer to her, and she was aware of a sudden shift in the air around them. His gaze locked with hers. “What do you want?” He asked, and the change in his voice made her shiver.

“Sherlock… please tell me you aren’t offering to… to have sex with me for a cigarette.”

“People do it all the time in prison, don’t they?” He asked.

“We’re not in prison!” Molly exclaimed.

Sherlock raised his eyebrows.

“OK, fair point. But still!” Molly said angrily.

He tilted his head. “I’ve upset you. Are you not in love with me anymore? Is that it?”

“No, wait, I mean… yes. Yes, I still love you,” Molly sighed, wishing he didn’t still occasionally have the power to make her stammer.

He took another step toward her. “Do you not still desire me?”

“Sherlock… I…”

“Tell me.”

“You know I do,” Molly said, taking a step away from him. Which didn’t help because he followed her.

“Then what is the problem?” He asked, and she shivered again.

“The problem is, you’re my friend. And having sex with you would be a disaster.” She took another step back.

He stopped. “Having sex. With me. Would be a disaster.”
“Because we’d be doing it for the wrong reasons!” Molly exclaimed. “Not to mention Moriarty would win!”

“There are right reasons to have sex?” Sherlock asked.

“Yes. Sex is because you’re in love or at least you like each other. Not as a… a business transaction!”

“Someone needs to tell the prostitutes that,” Sherlock said dryly. “And why do you think I don’t like you? You’re my friend, aren’t you?”

“Yes, and that’s all that I am, and… it wouldn’t feel right,” Molly said.

He rolled his eyes. “Feelings. Why do they have to complicate something so simple?”

“Because there’s no other reason for people to have sex.”

Sherlock waved a hand. “Nonsense. People have sex for many reasons. Power, revenge, money… liking or loving someone is just a small part of that.”

“Well it’s the only part I care about,” Molly said, turning away from him with a scowl.

Sherlock sighed. “All right.”

Molly turned. “All right?” She echoed.

“Yes. While I have no doubt that I could seduce you to the point of acquiescence, in light of your… feelings, that would be… wrong.”

Molly looked at him. “There was a time when you didn’t worry about my… feelings.”

“That was then. The stakes are a good bit higher here than simply flirting with you. Besides, if it would damage our friendship irrevocably, it isn’t worth it. You are far more valuable to me in the long term than the transient pleasure to be obtained from one cigarette.”

Molly frowned slightly. “Thank you?”

He nodded.

“Sherlock… do you really care that little about your virginity that you’d have given it up for a cigarette?” Molly asked.

He considered his words before he spoke. “My virginity exists because sex, with or without emotions, interferes with reason. I have always been careful not to let that happen.”

“But it did,” Molly said. “Something interfered with reason, I mean. You have friends.”

He shrugged slightly. “I am not perfect. Even I need some measure of companionship.”

“You make it sound like we’re all your dogs,” Molly said, turning away.

Sherlock caught her by the arm. “No,” he told her quietly. “You’re my friends. And if I had to choose a woman to give my virginity to, it would be you.”

She stared at him in shock. “Me? Why? What about”—she searched her memory for what Sherlock had called her—“Irene Adler? The Woman?”
Sherlock’s hand fell away. “The Woman.” He’d told Molly about her during the Fall. She had come to check on him once. She’d smiled at him, then at Molly, before she disappeared again.

“I’m nothing like her,” Molly said. She could feel tears threatening to fall and she cursed herself for it. She wiped at her face furiously. “She’s beautiful and clever and adventurous. Why would you possibly want me?”

Sherlock stared into her eyes. “You’re right. You are nothing like her. She is cold, calculating, and opportunistic. She may have some semblance of caring for a few people but her loyalty is ultimately only to herself. What good is beauty or cleverness if it only exists to harm others? I have never trusted her. I have always trusted you.”

Molly felt like crying all over again. This time it was for a good reason, though. “Thank you, Sherlock,” she said softly.

He gave her a faint smile before walking to the bookshelf.

The rest of the afternoon passed much the same way it always did when they weren’t being tortured in some way. They read and ate lunch and talked a bit. When the deadline rolled around Moriarty’s voice came over the speakers. “Well?”

Molly took out the cigarette and held it up in triumph.

“Oh, my. I’m impressed, Sherlock. And with you too, Molly. I figured Sherlock would offer to sex you up and you’d fold like a lawn chair. But no. Interesting. I suppose I’ll have to up the stakes a little in the future. Well. Since you were both so good, I’m going to give you a reward. Stay tuned!”

Molly sighed and did what she’d wanted to do for the past 6 hours: she broke the cigarette in half and threw it in the bin. “His rewards make me almost as nervous as his experiments,” she said softly.

Sherlock nodded in somber agreement.

Nearly 3 hours later, they heard footsteps. A silver tray slid through the swinging door. Sherlock and Molly both frowned as they examined what was on it. Water in a large plastic pitcher. Two wide, clear plastic cups. Two dozen battery-powered tea lights. A film canister. A pack of condoms and another personal MP3 player for the stereo. A small placard on top of it read “Take a Little Trip” in Moriarty’s own neat handwriting.

“Condoms?” Molly exclaimed loudly in bewilderment.

“You never know,” Moriarty’s voice resonated through the room. “Just want you kids to be prepared for the possibility.”

“Where are we going?” Sherlock asked as Molly picked up the film canister.

“Well, nowhere, really. Or everywhere, depending on how you look at it.”

Molly opened the canister. When she saw what was inside she paled. “Sherlock-”

“What sort of metaphysical rubbish is that?” Sherlock asked.

Molly’s voice was low and apprehensive. “The drug-induced kind.”

Sherlock turned to look at her, his eyes traveling rapidly down to the contents of the canister. He went very still.
Sitting inside were two tiny white paper squares.

Chapter End Notes

If you don't know what the tiny white paper squares are, you can Google it or wait until the start of the next chapter.
A long, strange trip.

Chapter Summary

Sherlock and Molly have drug-induced experiences and Sherlock has an epiphany.

Chapter Notes

Here be non-con drug use. I used real medical data along with my interpretation of how Sherlock and Molly's personalities would cause their trips to manifest under the circumstances.

Thank you all for reading! I'm sherlolly on Tumblr and on Facebook at https://www.facebook.com/Nocturnias

Thanks to Chelz as always for her support.

“You can’t possibly be serious,” Sherlock said flatly.

“Why not? It did Timothy Leary a lot of good, didn't it?”

“Timothy Leary is dead,” Sherlock said.

“But not from LSD,” Moriarty countered.

Molly wordlessly closed the container and sat it back down.

“This is madness. How can you possibly see this as being a reward?” Sherlock asked him.


“If I knew everything why would I be here?” Sherlock said angrily. “I know everything as much as you know everything.”

“Woof. Molly, what do you think? This isn’t just the Sherlock show starring Sherlock, after all.”

Molly’s eyes narrowed. “This isn’t a reward for us. It’s a reward for you, because you didn’t get what you wanted with the cigarette.”

“GOOD! Oh, she’s good, Sherlock. Ordinary Plus, I like to call her and John. I’ve always wondered how you’d be on a trip, Sherlock. Now I can find out.”

“Why don’t you join us? I’m sure it would be an educational experience for you to “trip” as well,” Sherlock said.

“What makes you think I haven’t ever done it?” Moriarty asked. “I found it to be quite…
stimulating. Though to be fair I didn’t like the loss of control. I’m betting you won’t either.”

“Then you shouldn’t need any data on me, since I am you.”

“But you’re not, are you? Not completely. Oh, we’re just alike in so many ways, but not entirely. It’s the differences that interest me, you see. The devil is always in the details. Now I think we’ve had enough chatting. Clear for takeoff.”

“And what will you do if we don’t?” Sherlock asked.

“Oh, honey. Do you really want to find that out?”

“Fine.”

“What? No, it’s not fine!” Molly said.

“Would you rather something else happen? I could use some data on shock therapy as well,” Moriarty said.

Molly clamped down on her rising tide of anxiety and shook her head.

“Good. Now get to it. I won’t be here to watch it myself; that’s what video is for, though. We’ll chat about it in a few days when I get back. Meanwhile, to use the slang: buckle up and enjoy the ride, bitches.”

The intercom went dead. Molly looked at Sherlock. “You’ve never done LSD?”

“No. Why would I have? Some of the effects are… not my area. What about you?”

“Once,” Molly admitted, and Sherlock raised his eyebrows in surprise. He’d thought he’d be asking the question out of politeness. He didn’t expect her to say yes. “You don’t seem the type,” he said. He wasn’t really bothered about being wrong. He always missed something.

“I did a lot of things at uni,” Molly said. “I was away from home and I was…curious.”

Sherlock nodded. “Yes, that makes sense,” he murmured. “Well. Shall we, Molly Hooper?”

She sighed. “Not much choice in the matter, is there?”

“No unless you prefer the shock treatment after all, no.”

Sherlock connected the new MP3 player while Molly turned on the candles and scattered them around the room, leaving a few in the center on the floor. She remembered the fascination with them from uni. Moriarty obviously knew it too. They worked in silence until Sherlock abruptly asked: “What was it like? When you took LSD. What was it like for you?”

Molly looked over at him. “It was scary,” she admitted. “And exhilarating. It’s not like any other drug. It… opens your mind and lets you see. The details, the emotions…there’s really no good way to describe a good trip.”

“And what if you have a bad trip?” Sherlock asked.

Molly turned on the final candle and on cue the lights went out. The glow of the candles cast flickering shadows on the walls. She sat at the table while Sherlock brought the tray over and put it down. He hit the play button on the stereo and took the other chair. The soft sounds of thunder mixed with an organ cascaded through the room.
“It’s ‘Riders on the Storm’ by the Doors,” Molly said softly.

“Molly.”

“You’re not going to have a bad trip,” she said firmly.

“How do you know that?” Sherlock asked.

“Because you have me and you trust me.”

“So what makes someone have a bad trip?”

“People have bad trips because of poor quality acid. Or they aren’t prepared. Or they’re unstable or they don’t have a flight attendant they trust. I’m not saying it will all be fantastic. It may not be. But I’m here with you and that will help.”

He frowned. “Flight attendant?”

“It’s what they call a person who helps someone else have a good first time taking LSD.”

“I see.” He looked around the room. “Well. The sooner we take it the sooner the ‘trip’ will be over.”

Molly popped the lid off the container again. She carefully removed one paper square then handed the canister to Sherlock. He slid his dose out into his hand. “Under the tongue? Sub-lingual delivery is the fastest, after all,” he said.

“All right. On three, then?”

He nodded, and they brought their doses to their lips, counting in unison. “One…two…three.”

And Sherlock Holmes and Molly Hooper took LSD together by candlelight.

Ten minutes later Sherlock frowned. “I don’t feel anything. When am I going to feel something?”

“It can take up to 2 hours for the come up,” Molly told him.

“The come up?”

“The onset. The takeoff. I thought you’d know everything about every drug there is.”

“Not much happens anymore with LSD,” Sherlock said. “Most people are running around smoking cannabis or taking ecstasy or cocaine. I’ll add the information again if there’s ever a resurgence in its popularity.”

Well, that made sense knowing him. “Yeah, good thing he didn’t have us take ecstasy,” Molly said, and immediately wished she could take it back. Her eyes went involuntarily to the condoms and she felt a slight blush on her cheeks.

Sherlock looked at her but didn’t comment. He rose from his chair and started pacing around. “How does a “trip” usually last?”

“Anywhere from 8 to 12 hours,” Molly answered.

Sherlock looked dismayed. “That long?”

“That’s why they call it a trip,” Molly murmured.
He said no more, simply continued pacing. “I hate waiting,” he murmured.

“Don’t we all,” Molly answered.

“You seem to fare well with it,” he said. “You’re very patient.”

Molly blinked. “Never thought about it that way.”

“Most people don’t,” he answered, not stopping.

Molly stood up about 30 minutes later and was stretching when it hit her.

“Oh,” she said as her body began to tingle.

Sherlock stopped pacing and waked over to her. “You feel something, then? What is it?”

“Tingling. All over. Feels…nice.”

“Nice?” He echoed.

“Mmm. More than nice.” Actually it felt pretty fantastic, but considered that they’d been forced to take the LSD, she hated to think of saying it.

“Why has it affected you and not me? Is it because you’ve taken it before? Or are people with superior minds less susceptible?”

“Sherlock?”

“Yes?”

“Shut up with all that, please.”

He looked so petulant she had to laugh. And then she kept laughing. He frowned. “It isn’t funny.”

“Yes, it is,” Molly managed between laughs.

“I shall deduce that is the LSD talking. And laughing,” he said sourly.

“Oh, stop being a baby.” She stared at him. “You think everything has to be put in some box in less than 2 seconds or you’re failing. You’re brilliant. There’s no one else in the world like you. Stop being so hard on yourself.”

“No one except him,” Sherlock said.

“He’s not like you. Yeah, he’s brilliant but he’s a bastard. He’s insane and doesn’t care about anyone but himself. That’s not you.”

“If I didn’t care about anyone you wouldn’t be here,” Sherlock said quietly.

“Stop. It’s his fault, not yours. I’d be here a thousand times over if I knew it meant you cared about me.”

Sherlock looked stricken. “How can you say that?”

“It’s the truth.”

“Molly-”
“I said shut up,” she repeated firmly. “John loves you that much. I love you that much. You’re not him. You’re not a monster. You’re the best man I’ve ever known, even when you’re being a shit.”

She tilted her head. “And you’re also rather bright right now. And a little ripply.”

“Apparently LSD also makes one ramble,” he said, but his tone wasn’t harsh.

Molly looked around. Everything was coming at her in waves now: the shapes and colors were rushing toward her like an ocean tide, filling her senses before they washed back out again. She wanted to just lie down on the floor and look at Sherlock and the light and the walls and shadows, so she did exactly that.

Sherlock frowned, then sighed and paced around her.

Molly had no idea of how long she was there, staring around herself in rapt attention. It was just like she’d remembered it over a decade ago. Everything blurred and melted together for a few seconds, only to stretch itself back out. The music: she felt it. It was warm on her tongue and tasted like oranges. She felt relaxed but she also felt driven, energetic. She wanted—she needed—to express everything that was building up inside her somehow. Her entire body felt utterly alive and she wanted to share it with Sherlock.

Sherlock had completed his twenty-third lap around the room when he found himself face-to-face with Molly. She had moved so quietly and smoothly he hadn’t realized she was there until he turned and she was in front of him. Her eyes were bright and she was smiling. Beaming at him, actually. He’d never seen her quite like this and the sudden shift between Molly lying on the floor and this Molly was disturbing.

“Molly?”

“Do you see it, Sherlock?” She asked in a whisper.

“See what?”

“Everything.”

Sherlock sighed. “Molly, I know you’re under the influence but that’s imprecise. Could you try to—”

Then Sherlock’s dose kicked in and his world exploded.

He… saw Molly. And that sounded stupid but there was no better way to explain it. He saw every pore, every curve, every facet of her body. It was as though she had been carved from glass and was a mosaic come to life. She was just so… amazing.

Somewhere in his mind he was aware that his pupils had dilated and his blood pressure had risen slightly. His breath quickened. He felt his blood surging through him. It throbbed in his veins in perfect synch with the beating of his heart. Arousal. It was sexual, yet it was more than sexual. He felt as though he was one with everything.

His hands rose of their own accord and touched Molly’s face. His skin dissolved where it touched hers and melted into her. It was as though he was becoming her. That thought should have made him scornful but it felt right. Glorious.

She stared at him. “You do feel it,” Molly said softly.

“Yes.” The music was pounding in his head, and he unconsciously swayed a bit. He looked around
him almost dreamily. Everywhere he turned the colors blinded him and he saw them coalesce. It was remarkable. He couldn’t have properly explained it to anyone no matter how many words he used. He understood now what Molly had meant.

“You’re beautiful,” he breathed, watching as her mouth opened and color flowed from her like rain.

Molly blinked in surprise. Had he really just said that? Definitely tripping. Sherlock Holmes didn’t use adjectives unless he was spouting off facts.

His hands on her face looked like flowers with their petals curled against her cheek. His features had elongated and blurred and he looked like some sort of vampire from an anime cartoon. Molly stared at him in fascination, wondering what he’d taste like. He smelled like the ocean and chocolate.

It appeared Sherlock was wondering the same thing, because his lips parted and he moved closer to her. He radiated heat. Normally his skin was cool to the touch. Not now though. He felt like liquid fire. She wanted to burn in that heat, just evaporate into air and be breathed in by him.

He knew. Part of him buried down deep somehow knew and it was scratching and clawing its way up. He was only dimly aware of it at the moment though and Molly kept disintegrating and reforming under his hands, a phoenix to the flame. He’d never seen anything so pure and sacred. Surely if he possessed it he would become more than just Sherlock Holmes. There would be nothing he could not understand. It would complete him, make him perfect. It had been there all along, this oasis. Drink from me and live forever.

His lips were a scant inch from Molly’s when the thing burst to the surface. Reason had fought its way out of the box the LSD had buried it in and began to scream.

“No,” he said hoarsely, pulling away. Fear licked at him, twined itself around him. “No, it’s not real. Nothing I see, nothing I feel is real!” There was no oasis. Only a mirage that men lost their lives to because they could no longer separate fact from fantasy.

Molly looked at him, all folded over a dozen times into himself. “Sherlock-”

“It’s all a trick. It’s the drug. I can’t…”

“Sherlock you have to calm down,” Molly said softly. “It’s not real but you can’t just make it stop. You’re between altered states and you’re feeling paranoid and afraid. It’s OK.”

“It is NOT.OK!” He shouted. “My mind isn’t meant to process something like this. Not able to trust my senses.” He turned away, leaving a trail of shimmering bubbles in his stead.

“You know it’s the LSD,” Molly said. “It will go away.”

“That doesn’t help,” he said. “I can’t turn it off. It just keeps going.” He was visibly shaking now.

“Sherlock-”

He turned so abruptly Molly almost stumbled back. He grabbed her shoulders. She saw the wildness in his gaze, tasted the cold chill of his fear. He stared angrily into her eyes. “DON’T YOU UNDERSTAND THAT-oh.”

He calmed so fast Molly was more frightened than when he’d begun to rave. “Sherlock?”

Her eyes.
The universe was in them.

Every planet, every moon, every satellite and meteor had somehow found its way into Molly Hooper’s large dark eyes. He could see them turning and orbiting and streaking along through the galaxies. He forgot that he was angry and afraid and moved against her, his own eyes bright with fascination.

“Sherlock?” Molly repeated softly.

“It’s all there,” he said reverently. “How did it find you?”

Molly had no idea what he was on about, but at least he was quieter now. He sank down toward the floor and gently pulled her with him until they were lying side by side in the circle of candles. “Planet Caravan” was playing, the slow drum beats and soft guitar lulling Molly back into surrealism.

Sherlock propped his head up in one hand and stared down at Molly. She lay flat, her face turned towards his. The urge to touch him was strong and she reached a hand up and ran it through his curls. A flock of ravens flew out of his hair and disappeared into the ceiling. She wanted to ask him what he was so entranced by, but she was afraid to break the spell. Better to let him be calm for this than lose it over something he couldn’t control. She lay still, looking up at him, fingers stroking his hair and face.

Eventually he lay down as well, pillowing his head on an arm as he continued to gaze into her eyes. Molly had seen him narrow his focus before, but never for so long with her as the sole point of his attention. To have him staring at her like this felt bizarre, but it was also strangely peaceful.

The almost kiss from earlier was forgotten in the wake of this communion. Sherlock had no idea of how long they lay there, staring at each other like obsessed lovers. He didn’t particularly care, either. Keeping his attention on her was his anchor.

Because he understood something now. It didn’t matter how many times Molly dissolved and reformed. It didn’t matter that her eyes were impossible windows to Cassiopeia and the moons of Jupiter. What mattered to him was that regardless of how she looked or what she sounded like, she was still Molly. And maybe he couldn’t trust his senses at the moment but he could trust her. He’d held on to that belief once before, when he jumped to save everyone’s life. He would hold on to it now.

Molly always kept him safe.
Sherlock stood, posture perfect, hands cuffed in front of him and surrounded by half a dozen men, waiting for Moriarty. The room he was in resembled an Arabian pleasure den: huge round bed heaped with silver and gold pillows, richly upholstered chairs, dark red satin duvet, plush deep purple carpet, ornate tapestries covering the walls. The faint scent of orchids and sandalwood drifted to his nostrils.

It was a carnal room, designed to arouse the senses. The implications of that were… well.

He accessed his memories. Moriarty had been absent for six days after the night he’d forced them to take LSD. He and Molly had awakened the next morning thirsty and disoriented, chest to chest, foreheads resting against each other's. Otherwise, they were no worse for wear, and Sherlock had spent an hour compartmentalizing and filing away the details of the experience while Molly slept more.

The six days had seemed like an eternity. Sherlock began teaching Molly krav maga on the first day; and, when no one ordered him to stop, he continued. It was partly boredom, partly exercise, and the rest was so Molly could learn how to defend herself. He didn’t know if the opportunity to escape would present itself, but he wanted every possible advantage in case it did.

Moriarty had greeted them enthusiastically when he returned, saying he couldn’t wait to watch the video of their experience. Then there was silence the rest of the day, and it stretched out into the evening. Sherlock finally stood in front of a camera and looked up. “Well?” He’d asked.


“Puzzling? How?” Sherlock had asked.

“That’s for me to know and for you to find out,” Moriarty said.
“Isn’t that a bit childish?”

“Pot meet kettle, Sherlock. Did you learn anything, Saint Molly, from this little experience?”

“Drink more water?” Molly offered, and Sherlock very nearly laughed.

“Don’t be cute with me. Anything about Sherlock.”

“Nothing I’m sure you don’t already know,” Molly said.

“Protective. How sweet. Come to think of it, how can anyone be as nice as you are, Molly? Surely there are some hidden dark depths to you somewhere… I’d like to see them. Yes, that would be funny… OK, I’m off for now. See you in a few days!”

That was three days ago. Now he’d been taken out of the room he and Molly shared, stripped, cuffed, and brought here.

Moriarty walked into the room at that moment. “This isn’t your usual style,” Sherlock said dryly, and Moriarty smiled.

“Now, Sherlock. You know I love the finer things. Westwood suits, Crown Jewels, and presents. It’s been ages since someone gave me a gift! So as you can imagine, I end up giving them to myself.”

“Is that what I am today? Your gift?” Sherlock asked contemptuously.

“Not exactly. I mean, you are a gift. One of the best I’ve ever had. But no. Today, my dear, you are a gift for our lovely Ordinary Plus pathologist, Molly.”

Sherlock frowned. “I don’t understand.”

Moriarty raised his eyebrows. “No? Then you soon will.”

As if on cue, a man came in wheeling a stainless steel trolley. Sherlock flicked his eyes over it. Small clay pots, tiny boar’s head brushes: make-up of some sort. Several small boxes whose contents he couldn’t deduce. And in the center of it all, a slim silver ribbon that came together in an elaborate bow. A ribbon whose measurements were perfectly suited to go around his neck.

Suddenly he understood all too well.

“You meant that literally,” Sherlock said flatly.

“Of course. What, you think I’d be metaphysical at a time like this? When I have to prepare my finest work of art?”

“Molly is not going to appreciate your present,” Sherlock told Moriarty, and the madman smiled again.

“Such a pessimist. It’s time to get started.” He looked Sherlock over critically. “Yes, I do believe your features and demeanor are best suited to silver.”

Without warning he shoved Sherlock into a chair and grabbed his chin, tilting his face up. “Now behave yourself while I do this. We can’t give you to Molly as is, you know. It’s got to be something special.”

“This is-” Sherlock began, and Moriarty struck him across the face in a blur of black. Not hard enough to do any damage, but enough to make a point.
“I told you to behave,” he snapped. “Don’t make me gag you. I’ve got plans for that mouth.”

Sherlock took a deep aggravated breath but was quiet and still otherwise. Satisfied, Moriarty began opening containers. He dipped a brush into one of the pots, which contained a silvery metallic powder, and brushed it slowly over one of Sherlock’s eyelids. When he finished, he tilted Sherlock’s face, studying his work before nodding and repeating it on his other eye.

When he’d finished, he sat the brush down and reached for a tube of black mascara. “Just a touch,” Moriarty murmured, holding Sherlock’s chin tightly while he applied a coat to each eye.

Sherlock allowed him to make his eyes up: there was no sense in struggling. When the mascara was done, Moriarty used a soft kohl pencil and lightly lined Sherlock’s eyes along the bottom. Then he turned Sherlock’s face left and right, looking him over, making an adjustment to the eye shadow on his right eye. Then he beamed. “Gorgeous!”

“Are you going to let me see?” Sherlock asked, annoyed.

“Not until it’s finished,” Moriarty tutted. “Let’s do your lips next.”

From another clay pot he used a brush to paint a cool, clear gel of some sort on Sherlock’s mouth, then gently exhaled onto it. Sherlock felt a tingling burn that seemed to set all his nerves on fire. “What is that?” He asked.

“Nice, isn’t it? A little something from the lab. It’s got capsaicin in it, and, well, some other things that are a secret. Different from warming massage oil, though. The effects can last for hours and are a little more… intense, as you’ll soon notice.”

He breathed again, and Sherlock felt his face heat up from the stimulation. Moriarty smiled. “Oh, you flush so beautifully,” he murmured. “I knew you would. We’ll stop there with your face. No need to overdo it, just wanted to emphasize your natural beauty!”

Sherlock barely managed to bite down his retort. “Now what?” He asked instead of making his comment, almost sighing in relief when the sensation slowly began to fade. Apparently it was kinetically activated.

Moriarty blinked as though it should have been obvious. “Well, your dick, of course.”

“My…what?” Sherlock asked, not quite able to believe what Moriarty had just said.

Moriarty rolled his eyes. He pulled Sherlock out of the chair and shoved him roughly onto the bed. “Your dick,” he repeated, as he pressed on Sherlock’s chest and forced him to lie down, stretching his cuffed hands over his head. “Does it bother you so much that you try and forget that you have one?”

“No need,” Sherlock said.

“No need for your cock, or to forget that you have one?”

“Both.”

“Liar,” Moriarty jeered. “You might hate to admit it, Sherlock, but you are still a man. And even the best of men have urges.”

“In case you’d forgotten, I pay mine no mind,” Sherlock said.
Moriarty leaned over him. “Never?” He whispered into Sherlock’s ear. “You’re going to try and tell me you’ve never touched yourself, never wanked? I don’t believe you.”

Sherlock thought that this was heading into dangerous territory, so he remained silent.

Moriarty laughed. “I knew it.”

Sherlock glared at him.

“Anyway, as I was saying,” Moriarty said, moving away from Sherlock and back to the trolley. He picked up latex gloves, a tube of something and another box, then moved back to sit beside Sherlock.

Without warning, he reached for Sherlock’s cock. Sherlock held very still, the only sound coming from him was an almost inaudible intake of breath. Moriarty gave it a firm squeeze, then released it.

“It’s very different when someone else is touching you, isn’t it?” He asked conversationally as he donned the gloves, opening the tube and squeezing a small amount of oil into his left hand.

“I thought you don’t like getting your hands dirty,” Sherlock said.

“I told you, I make exceptions,” Moriarty replied, then wrapped his hand around Sherlock’s shaft and glided it up and down.

Sherlock felt as though Moriarty’s hand was made of some sort of intoxicating fire. He bit his lip to stop a gasp from wrenching itself from him, and his captor grinned.

“Like it? It’s similar to what I put on your mouth. Don’t run off,” he added, noticing that Sherlock was trying to mentally disassociate himself from what was happening and take refuge in his mind palace. “And don’t fight it, either. The more you try to get away, the harder I’ll come after you.”

Sherlock felt a tremor pass through him. Without his mental detachment, his body didn’t have a way to protect itself from the stimulus, and it was responding despite his inner protests. He clamped down tighter on his lip to stop another gasp as Moriarty slid his hand down to cup his bollocks.

It was an unbearable violation made worse by the fact that Moriarty was coaxing a reaction from his body. *Transport, it’s only transport,* Sherlock reminded himself fiercely, but his transport was currently being uncooperative to his wishes. If only it was an assault, it would’ve been far easier to bear. But no. Moriarty was deliberately evoking arousal from him and that was worse than rape. Rape, Sherlock could handle. This was manipulation.

“Good boy,” Moriarty purred, as Sherlock hardened in his hand. “And since we don’t want to lose that..” his right hand opened the box while the left continued fondling Sherlock, who lay helpless and angry and miserably aroused. He took an electric blue cock ring out of the box, and with a final stroke and squeeze, slid it down over Sherlock’s cock.

Sherlock shivered. He felt too many sensations to effectively process them all. His cock was tight and swollen, his heart rate was up, and he was on the border of being agitated by his body’s betrayal. “Why couldn’t you have just drugged me?” He asked plaintively. “You could have given me some sildenafil citrate or MDMA and thrown in some coercion to make me do what you want. Why are you doing all this?”

“Would you like me to drug you?” Moriarty asked. “Would some X help ease you into it?”

“I would rather you let me *out of it,*” Sherlock said, and Moriarty laughed.
“Not happening. You’re Molly’s present, remember?”

“Why?” Sherlock demanded. “What possible test could you need results for that necessitates this?”

Moriarty frowned. “There are a lot of ways I could get my results. But this way is the most fun, you idiot.”

“This is some kink of yours? Oh, you’re a piece of work, aren’t you?” Sherlock spat.

“Watch your mouth, pretty boy,” Moriarty warned. “I’m being awfully patient with you since you’re a little virgin lamb, but don’t push your luck.”

“Or what?”

“Or I’ll give you something to put your mind into a nice drugged, docile haze where you can barely string a sentence together.”

Sherlock flinched. He lay still and quiet. Moriarty then fetched and opened another container. It had baby oil mixed with some faint shimmering silver powder. He poured some onto his hands and began rubbing it over Sherlock’s chest.

“Now, as I was saying,” Moriarty said, “would you like some X?”

Sherlock shook his head.

“Sure? You seemed to lament not being drugged five minutes ago.”

“No,” Sherlock said softly. As tempting as it was in a way, to lose himself in a drug and detach his mind from what Moriarty had planned for his body, it wasn’t the answer.

“Molly will not willingly choose this, you know. You’ll have to force her into it,” he told Moriarty.

“Well that’s the question, isn’t it? Will I?”

Sherlock stared at him. “How could you think you wouldn’t?”

“Maybe Molly has some insane evil tucked away somewhere inside her just waiting to be brought out. Maybe I can bring her to the dark side.”

Sherlock snorted. “That is about as likely to happen as a pig will fly.”

Moriarty shrugged. “It’s all about the experiments, my dear. Which, I gather, is why you don’t want any drugs.”

“Yes.” If this was going to happen, he might as well be able to get some data from the experience. He could always delete whatever wasn’t useful….

No. Sherlock remembered with a start that he couldn’t delete any of the data from this. He had no way of knowing when Moriarty might decide to test him or what the consequences would be if he failed. In his distaste for this perverse experiment he’d almost forgotten that fact. He hadn’t deleted anything from when he’d woken up until now. Whether or not he remembered every single thing might be a different story, but he certainly knew most of the facts.

Moriarty finished oiling Sherlock’s chest. “Very nice,” he said absently. “Rather like polished marble. So pale. Maybe we should get you a nice tan while you’re here.”
“I’d rather not.”

“SO picky.” Moriarty blew a hard breath on Sherlock's right nipple, and Sherlock barely managed not to gasp. Then Moriarty rose and snapped off the gloves, moving back to the cart again. “One last touch and you’ll be ready.” He picked up the ribbon and brought it back, unfastening a concealed closure. He slipped it around Sherlock’s neck and fastened the snap, then stood back to admire his handiwork.

Sherlock raised his eyebrows as Moriarty whistled. “Lovely. I should have done this to you ages ago. You are one exquisite looking present, Sherlock.”

“May I see now?” Sherlock asked, irritated.

“Of course.” Moriarty brought over a large mirror.

Sherlock studied himself dispassionately. The makeup played up his eyes, emphasized the blue and made them appear larger. His lips were a bit darker and had a faint sheen to them, as did his chest from the oil. The bow gleamed around his neck and brought to mind the one Molly had worn in her hair at that Christmas party. Moriarty lowered the mirror and Sherlock cast his eyes downward. His dick was dark red from the blood, hard and swollen, imprisoned by the cock ring and just as helpless as the rest of him.

Moriarty put on a clean set of gloves, then stretched out next to Sherlock, grasping Sherlock’s cock and squeezing it again. His touch brought a flood of sensation, the combination of the chemicals in the oil and the ring making it nothing short of torment. He repeated his actions until Sherlock’s hips rose in spite of himself, then he smiled and stopped.

“Perfect,” he said, the delighted smile still on his lips. “Now all we need is to cover you up and unveil you to Molly. I can’t wait to see her face!”
Moriarty unveils his gift to Molly.

Molly was nervous. It had been nearly an hour since Moriarty’s men had taken Sherlock away. Since then the silence had stretched to the point where her nerves couldn’t take it. Even if it was some game of his, she would take the chance.

She walked over to a camera and looked up, imitating Sherlock. “Where is he? What are you doing to him?” She asked in an angry, scared voice.

“Missing him, are you?” Moriarty replied almost immediately. It was as though he’d been expecting her to say something. Fine. “Have you… are you separating us?” She asked, trying not to let the terror she felt at the prospect show.

“Separating you? Why would you think that? That would be so boring. No, no, dear Molly: on the contrary. I want you and Sherlock to always be together. I’ve even arranged for a special gift for you!”

“Gift? What gift?” Molly asked, feeling a knot form in her stomach.

“You’ll see. Someone is coming to fetch you as we speak.”

Molly endured the handcuffs and being pushed down the halls. All her mind could do was scream out: where is Sherlock?

Finally they stopped in front of a red door Molly had not seen before. Actually, looking around, she was slightly alarmed to notice every door in this hallway was a different color. There was a red, black, white, green, and blue door. Molly was no artist, but she knew the basics about colors and what they symbolized. The knot in her stomach turned into a triple twist.

Moriarty was waiting outside the door. He grinned and bounced on his toes when he saw Molly. “Molly, Molly, Molly,” he said gleefully. “Welcome to the Red Room! Do come in.”

He opened the door and held it wide so Molly could enter.

She looked around. It looked like something out of a magazine… or a porn movie. In the middle of the room something was covered by a shiny silver sheet. “Where’s Sherlock?” Molly demanded.

“Patience, my dear. Don’t you want to know what your gift is?” Moriarty asked.
“No. I don’t want any gifts from you. I just want to know what you’ve done with Sherlock.”

Moriarty sighed. “So single-minded. I admire that, though. Means you’re thorough. Well, good news, my dear: we can kill two birds with one stone!” He walked over to the sheet and grabbed two handfuls, pulling it away with a flourish. “Ta-da!”

Molly’s eyes widened and she cried out, involuntarily moving back a step.

Sitting naked on his knees on the floor, hands cuffed and resting on his thighs, head bent, eyes cast downward, was Sherlock.

“Oh, my God,” Molly breathed. “What have you done?”

“It’s it obvious? He’s a gift. For you! Your very own consulting detective, all prettied up and ready for you. I even put a bow around his neck!” Moriarty beamed.

“What… Why did you do this? What am I supposed to...” her words trailed off as she realized what he was implying. She shook her head violently. “No. I don’t want this. Why would you do this?” She cried out in anger and despair.

Moriarty stared at her. “Because it’s fun, of course. You should see your face! But come now, Molly, there’s no need to pretend. We all know how much you want Sherlock. Well, now you can have him! Do anything you like to him. Although if I may, I’d suggest taking that cock ring off him soon: his dick is probably almost ready to explode.”

“What?” Molly gasped. She’d stopped looking directly at Sherlock as soon as she’d seen he was naked, but now her eyes reflexively went to his genitals, widening in horror as she saw the ring. Then they traveled up, saw the oiled chest, the silver bow, the makeup on his eyes that made them insanely blue. He was so beautiful it made her heart lurch, immediately followed by fear and revulsion.

“Why won’t he look at me?” Molly demanded, frightened. “Did you drug him?”

“Not exactly. Gave him a little external stimulation is all. And he won’t look at you because you haven’t told him to.”

“Told him…” Molly faltered. She drew a deep breath. “Sherlock, please look at me.”

Sherlock’s eyes went to her face at once. Molly breathed a sigh of relief: he wasn’t drugged. The relief quickly gave way to anger and fear again. “What did you do?” She asked Moriarty.

“He belongs to you right now. He won’t do anything that isn’t a direct order from you,” Moriarty smiled.

“Direct order? No, wait… I’m not doing that!” Molly shrieked.

“No? Why ever not? I told you: he’s your gift. He didn’t like the idea, mind, but he knows what will happen if he disobeys.” Moriarty stared hard at Sherlock. “Don’t you, Sherlock?”

“You’re insane!” Molly said.

Moriarty rolled his eyes. “What is it with the two of you telling me something I already know? Go on, now. He’s waiting for you, ready to do anything you command.” He gave her an eerie, sinister smile. “Anything, Molly. Doesn’t that excite you?”
“No,” Molly choked out. She started to turn away, but Moriarty stood behind her and forced her to keep facing Sherlock.

“Think about all the times he’s hurt you, Molly,” Moriarty whispered. “All the cruel things that he’s said to you. Think about that Christmas party. You looked beautiful, Molly. And you bought him that lovely antique magnifying glass. And what did he do? Tore you to shreds, didn’t he?”

“How did you—” Molly began, and stopped when his hands tightened painfully on her shoulders. She gasped. Out of the corner of her eye she saw a muscle clench in Sherlock’s jaw, but other than that he remained still.

“Didn’t he, Molly?” Moriarty hissed in her ear, and she shuddered.

“He… he apologized,” she said weakly. “He said he was sorry!”

Moriarty’s grip lessened. “So he did. But come now, Molly: surely you didn’t believe him, did you?”

“Yes,” Molly said, her voice finding strength again. “Yes, I did.” Her eyes met Sherlock’s and she added: “I trust him.”

“Oh, God!” Moriarty groaned, moving to stand beside her. “Don’t you understand what I’m offering you? The chance to do anything you want to the man who has hurt you and used you over and over. How can you not want to hurt him back? Whip him, torment him, hate fuck him: something.” He spun Molly around to face him and stared at her in animosity. “Why?”

“Because I love him,” Molly said. “And when you love someone, you don’t want to hurt them. You want to make them happy.”

Moriarty stared at her in honest bewilderment. “You do, don’t you. You really love him. As awful as he’s been to you.” His voice rose half an octave. “You really, stupidly, nobly, pathetically love him!”

He slapped Molly hard across the face. She cried out and staggered back a step. Sherlock started to get up but Moriarty shot him a look of pure insane fury. “Don’t. Or I’ll do it.”

Sherlock slowly sank back down, glaring at Moriarty in hatred. The madman turned back to Molly. “Saint Molly,” he mocked. His hands trembled. “I did all this work, all these plans, and offered you the perfect gift. And you don’t want him. Why, Molly? Why do you have to be so fucking good?”

He screamed at her in rage.

As suddenly as his anger had surfaced, it disappeared. He drew a deep breath and shook his head. “Fine. You’re so bloody pure,” he growled. “It doesn’t matter. You’re going to do it anyway.”

“Do.. do what?” Molly asked. Her face hurt and her ear still rang a bit from the slap, but she was afraid to touch her face, afraid of setting him off again.

“I gave you a present. And you’re going to play with it like the good little girl you are.”

Molly paled. Bile and fear rose up in her throat. “No. No, I won’t!”

“Oh, yes, Molly,” he said coldly. “Because if you don’t, I will.”

Molly’s brain reeled at the implication of that.

“And I’ll make you watch,” Moriarty added.
She stood dumbstruck and shaking. He meant it. If she didn’t do… something with Sherlock, he’d hurt him.

“So, I think you understand me, don’t you.” It wasn’t a question. Moriarty walked over to the door. “And you’d both better do as you’ve been told. You won’t like it if I have to come back in here angry.”

His men followed him out. Moriarty stood in the doorway, looking at them. He shook his head.

“The side of the angels. Both of you. Fucking crazy.” He threw the handcuff key down just inside the door and grinned. “Don’t do anything I wouldn’t do!”

The door slammed shut.

Molly rushed over to get the key, then dropped to her knees beside Sherlock. He hadn’t moved, just looked at her. She could almost feel his anger, his misery.

“Sherlock?”

He didn’t respond.

Dammit. Molly exhaled forcefully. “Sherlock, speak freely any time you wish.”

As soon as the words left her mouth, he spoke. “Are you all right?” He asked her.

Molly nodded, handing him the key. “Uncuff us,” she said, hating this game but too afraid of the consequences not to play. Sherlock released her hands, then his, and immediately dropped both cuffs and key. “Are you all right?” He repeated.

“I’m fine, other than the slap. Are you? What did he do to you? What did he threaten you with?”

“I’m fine,” he replied. “He made me into your gift. And he told me I could only do something if you told me to, not to even speak without your command. And that if I didn’t… he would hurt you. In ways I couldn’t imagine.”

Molly trembled. “So… if you don’t do what he wants, he’ll hurt me. And if I don’t do what he wants, he’ll hurt you.”

“A convenient way of compelling acquiescence in two captives,” Sherlock said.

“So what… what do we do to make him stop this?” Molly asked.

Sherlock looked thoughtful. “He was hoping you’d either want to hurt me physically or make me have sex with you. I suspect that either of those will suffice.”

“What?” Molly exclaimed. “Hurt you? Have sex with you?”

“Mmm. I don’t really have data for either of those things,” Sherlock said. “I’ve been in fights of course, but this is different. Do you have a preference?”

“Do I have a…” Molly took a deep unsteady breath. “Sherlock, do you understand that you’ve just told me that either I need to… to beat you, or have sex with you? Do you understand what you’re saying?”

He blinked. “Of course I do. But those are our only options. I don’t like either of them any more than you do but that doesn’t matter. You aren’t to blame regardless, Molly.” His gaze locked with hers.
“So which do you choose?”
Molly's Choice

Chapter Summary

Molly makes her choice and they play the game to its end.

Chapter Notes

Longest chapter yet! Thank you all so much for reading, kudos, and comments. They really make my day!

Happy Birthday, Dearest Lono! This is for you.

Much love as always to CumberChelz, aka Cumberseedybatch, for everything she does.

And to my Best Girl, my Watson, BritMel, who always reads even if it's scary.

Molly shook her head. “No. I can’t… I can’t do this.” Her heart was racing and she felt sick. How could she possibly make a choice like that? Even worse, how could she carry it out?

Sherlock sighed. “Molly. You know what will happen if you don’t.”

“I can’t do it!” She cried, agonized. “You’re my friend. How can I make a choice like that? To, to hurt you, or…” her voice cracked. She couldn’t even say it.

He looked at her. She hated how beautiful he was, even in the middle of this sadistic insanity that had been put upon them. “If you don’t, he’ll take even those options away,” Sherlock said quietly. “And if I’m to be harmed or forced into sex, I’d rather it be with you on either count.”

Molly got to her feet and turned away, hugging herself despite the warmth of the room. She shivered. This was one hell of a Hobson’s choice, she thought bitterly. She turned back to him. He was still kneeling on the floor, looking at her. She swore silently. “Sherlock, stand up. Move around however you want. In fact, do anything you want, any time you want to do it.”

He rose with his usual grace and slowly walked over to her. “I’m sorry,” he told her softly. “I wish I could tell you it’s okay. But I’ve never lied to you before and I’m not about to start now.”

“I don’t know what to do,” Molly whispered. “Tell me what to do, Sherlock.”

He shook his head. “I can’t. It has to be your decision, Molly. Your choice.”

She felt her eyes well up with tears. “I… which would you like for me to choose?”

He brought a hand up and briefly touched her cheek, then wiped the tears that had spilled onto her face. “Whichever will hurt you the least.”

Molly stared at him, feeling a pain unlike anything she’d ever felt in her life. There was no getting
out of this. She had to decide something. Something she never in a million years would have thought she’d have to contemplate.

If she… hurt him, beat him with whatever Moriarty had left in the room (and she knew he’d left things, he would have prepared for this) he’d be physically injured. That would heal, in time, but leave him with the scars and her with the knowledge that she’d made that choice. And that would hurt emotionally. Every time she looked at Sherlock, even if she couldn’t see the marks, she’d know.

If they… (she couldn’t call it lovemaking, because it wouldn’t be, but she also couldn’t call it fucking, because it wouldn’t be that, either) had sex, she wouldn’t have to hurt Sherlock physically. It would hurt her emotionally, though. Badly. She didn’t know how she’d feel after that. She didn’t know if it would bother him or not, because as well as she knew him, Molly still at times had no clue what was in that man’s head.

She could think about it til the end of time, really. But in the end, she knew herself, and knew which of the two horrific choices was the least damaging. For her, and hopefully, for him.

She looked down for a moment, then drew a painful breath and looked at him again.

“All right,” she said softly.

“You’ve decided?” Sherlock asked, voice calm and curious.

“Yes.”

Sherlock watched as Molly crossed the room to where two ornate wooden chests rested: one large and one small. She opened the large one and withdrew a riding crop. Expertly crafted, from the look of it. Similar to the one The Woman had. He wondered if that was a coincidence. Molly tested it out in the air a few times, the whistling of the wind cutting through the silence in the room. She was surprisingly at ease with using it, and he wondered if she had ever used one before. She didn’t seem the type. Perhaps she had experimented with the one he kept in the morgue.

She nodded, then dropped it back into the chest as though it had scalded her. She opened the small chest and removed a small bottle of water and a pill case. Molly opened it, looked inside and nodded as though she’d known all along what it would contain. She put both items back in the chest and closed it.

Then Molly walked to the bed like someone walking to their execution. She sat down on the edge, not quite looking at him. His brows drew together in confusion.

“It’s levonorgestre,” Molly said before he could ask. “More commonly known as the morning after pill. Prevents pregnancy for up to five days.”

Sherlock felt even more confused. “You put the contents of both chests back in them.”

“Yes,” Molly replied. She met his eyes. “You don’t take the pill until after the sex.”

“Oh,” Sherlock said quietly. “So…”

“Yes.”

A sad, awkward silence filled the room for a moment.

Molly cleared her throat. “Well. Best get on with this.”
“Yes,” Sherlock agreed. He felt strangely nervous. Ridiculous, really. Or was it? Certainly not how he’d expected this to go, if he’d ever really considered it. The Woman had been a temptation. He couldn’t deny that. It wasn’t because she was beautiful, although she was. It was her mind that he’d admired. But her dubious moral code had gone against his own, and though he used people, it wasn’t for personal gain. It was always the work. Sex and sentiment would interfere with the work, so he didn’t indulge.

Now his only work was trying to second-guess Moriarty and minimize what harm might be done to Molly that he could. And since Moriarty had put sex on the table—glued and nailed it there, actually—perhaps it was time he thought about it.

He walked over to her and sat beside her on the bed, not touching but close enough to touch her. “Are you sure, Molly?” He asked softly.

She nodded. “I couldn’t hurt you physically. I mean, I could: I could hurt you badly if I wanted to.”

He nodded. Molly’s skill with a body was impressive. Sherlock had no doubt that her knowledge of anatomy would make it easy for her to inflict a lot of damage on him.

“But I don’t want to,” she said. “Every time I looked at you I’d see it. Even after it healed. I’d rather… it’s going to hurt either way but this way won’t leave scars. Not the kind you can see.”

“The other kind can be worse,” Sherlock said softly. He still bore the emotional scars of Reichenbach.

Molly shrugged. “We’re both scarred inside. A few more won’t make much difference.”

She was downplaying it: he knew that. Even now she wanted to be strong and brave because that’s what she wanted: what she thought he’d want. He wasn’t about to call her out on that, though. This was not the place or the time for it. Instead, he nodded, feeling at a loss again.

If regular physical intimacy wasn’t his area, being forced into it with someone who was in love with him definitely was not. And while he had feelings for Molly, it wasn’t the same as being in love. He wasn’t going to insult her by pretending anything (she wouldn’t believe it anyway), but he also wanted it to be as bearable as possible for both of them.

He took a deep breath. “I don’t…know how we do this, Molly.”

She raised her eyebrows.

“You know what I mean,” he said dryly.

She managed a wan smile. “Well, for starters, best let me take that ring off you.”

“I can-” he started to say, and she shook her head.

“Have you ever had a cock ring on before, Sherlock?” Molly asked.

He gave her a stony look.

“Didn’t think so. Trust me. There’s a right way and a wrong way.”

Sherlock didn’t try to argue the point. It wasn’t as though he had any knowledge about it. “All right,” he told her, glancing down for a moment before meeting her eyes. “I trust you, Molly,” he said softly. “We’ll do this however you want.”
Molly nodded. “Okay. Here, let me do this first…”

“Wait!” He said as she reached for him. “You need to know: he applied oil to me. Contains some sort of sexual stimulant. It’s kinetically activated. You’ll get it on your hands.”

“Okay,” she said gently. “It’s all right.

She reached over and grasped the ring in one hand and wrapped her slim fingers around the base of his cock with the other. The touch of her hands set off the oil and he couldn’t grit his teeth in time to stop a moan as the ache came roaring back.

Molly froze with her hands still on him. “Sherlock?”

“I’m fine,” he ground out. “Just… hurry.”

“I’m not about to just rip this off you,” Molly said. “Take a deep breath. I’ll be as quick and careful as I can.”

Holding him by the base, she carefully worked the ring of him, watching in alarm and sympathy as he fought not to moan again, his body tense, his engorged cock hot and hard in her hand. She released him immediately and threw the ring as hard as she could. It hit the wall and flew back a few feet before landing on the floor. Then she ripped the bow off his neck and threw that as far away as she could as well.

“All right?” Molly asked anxiously, and he nodded.

“Still… hurts, though,” he admitted, trying and failing to get his body under control. Perhaps if he… no. He and Molly still had to have sex. If he went into his Mind Palace, tried to fight the physical urges, he’d lose the erection and she’d have to stimulate him again.

“I think we should… carry on,” he said, breathing deeply.

Molly nodded. She stood up and, after a few seconds of hesitation, took off her clothes. She was painfully aware of Sherlock’s gaze on her. He’d seen her before: during the first day here, and once when she’d been changing clothes at her flat and he’d just barged in like he always did. But this was different. Painfully different.

When she’d finished, she stood naked in front of him at the foot of the bed, feeling suddenly shy and lost. Sherlock surprised her by taking her hand. She looked at him looking at her for a long moment. Then she sat back down beside him, still holding his hand. He surprised her again when he spoke.

“Molly I realize that this isn’t by choice for either of us. But I’d rather it not be an entirely horrible experience,” he said quietly.

Her eyes darted to his, then looked away. “I don’t… don’t know how to make it not be. You don’t love me, you’ve never even wanted me, and now… you’re just drugged and we don’t have a choice. It’s rape. You raping me. Me raping you. Him raping us.”

Sherlock nodded, surprised at her matter-of-fact assessment. She was right: it was rape. For both of them. But that wasn’t the entire story.

“You’re wrong, you know,” he said, echoing his words from months ago. She looked back at him, confused, and he continued. “I have wanted you.”

Molly’s eyes widened. “Then why haven’t you said something? Why haven’t you-”
"Molly. You know me. You know how I am about the work. You deserve someone who can give you everything he has to give. And that’s not me."

Molly felt tears burn her eyes again. She moved to turn away from him but he stopped her, gently wiping her face as he’d done earlier. “I know people say ‘it’s not you’ all the time, but it’s true. It’s not you, Molly. You’d be the best choice of a girlfriend I could ask for. But I can’t fully give myself to anyone. And I’d rather not break your heart any more than it’s already been broken.”

She nodded. “I understand.” She tried to decide which burned more: the tears, or his hand.

“I didn’t want you to think something that isn’t true,” Sherlock said, and she nodded again.

“Thank you,” Molly said quietly. “Thank you for telling me, Sherlock.”

He glanced down.

“Since you’d rather not flail me, we don’t have a choice with this,” he said at last, meeting her eyes again. “But we have a choice as to how it’s done. We decide how to experience it. Not him.”

She stared at him. He could see she was tired, and he knew it wasn’t a physical exhaustion. “What exactly are you saying, Sherlock?” Molly sighed.

Sherlock decided this was one of those times when action was best. And since he moved full speed ahead with anything he decided, he didn’t reply with words, but by closing the gap between them.

And as Molly looked at him with knitted brows and confusion etched on her features, he leaned over and gently kissed her.

Oh, God.

It was nothing like she’d imagined kissing him would be. For one, it was real. Second, she hadn’t imagined a supposedly dead psychopath forcing them into it. And third… he wasn’t very good at it. He was just sort of pressing his lips to hers and not moving. Surely he’d seen plenty of people kiss, hadn’t he? Had he really deleted all of the data? Or was it just so horrible for him he could barely make himself do it without getting sick?

That final thought caused Molly to pull away from him with a frown.

He’d opened his eyes as she’d pulled back and he was staring at her with a mix of puzzlement and concern. “Why did you move?”

“Sherlock… you don’t have to do this. Really. We can just… bloody hell, I don’t know,” Molly sighed.

“I want to do it,” he told her. Then his eyes narrowed. “It was… not good, was it?”

Molly shook her slightly and gave him a tiny smile. “No, not really. Have you never even kissed?”

“If I have, I’ve deleted it,” he said. “Not-

“Not compatible with the work, yes, I know,” Molly interrupted with a sigh. “Well, if you really want to try and make this… more bearable, maybe you should let me kiss you instead.”

If he was affronted by her reaction to his lack of skill, he gave no sign. “All right,” he agreed, then licked his bottom lip a bit and closed his eyes. The oil was making his lips tingle, making them want to be touching hers again. “Is this much right at least?” He asked wryly.
Under different circumstances Molly would have giggled. That Molly was gone. This Molly simply said: “Yes, Sherlock. It’s fine.”

She took a deep breath, then inched her lips over his, moving them slowly, watching him to see if he was going to leap away in disgust or make some horrid remark. He was quiet, though, and after about 10 seconds he seemed to finish processing the data and get the jist of it, opening his mouth to hers.

Molly closed her eyes as a sharp pain of loss pierced her. Here was her first kiss with him, possibly his first kiss ever, and it was practically at gunpoint. Only the memory of him telling her he’d choose her to be his first and the fact that he seemed to be ok with it kept her from pulling away and hiding under the bed. Well, and that practically at gunpoint bit.

Sherlock drew her down on the bed, stretching out over her as Molly deepened the kiss. He appeared fine with her taking the lead and keeping it, so she went on kissing him. She felt the oil he’d mentioned, felt it on her mouth, and the slow burn of it almost made her gasp. She kept her hands stiffly at her sides, though. She didn’t—she couldn’t—want to seem as though she was enjoying it. Which she realized was sort of counterproductive to what he’d wanted, but-

Sherlock stopped kissing her and sighed in exasperation. She opened her eyes to see him peering down at her. “Molly, I never thought I would say this, but you are thinking too loudly and too much.”

She flushed a little. “I know. I um, I just…”

He sighed again, and took one of her hands in his. “It is ok to touch me, Molly,” he said gently, and she flushed further, wondering how he’d deduced it. “It will make this a lot more difficult if you don’t.”

Molly swallowed hard, gazing into his eyes. She suddenly felt a weight crushing her, pressing all the air out of her body. Her hands tingled and all she wanted to do was run away but there was nowhere to run to.

Sherlock took the hand he’d lifted and guided it to his hair. That thick, glossy, impossibly soft hair—oh, God, she couldn’t breathe, she couldn’t—

“Molly.” His voice was sharp. She looked at him with a gasp. He stared back at her with the same cool expression he used for most everything before something shifted slightly in his understanding. In a softer tone he said: “Breathe, Molly. Properly. And let it go.”

He brought his mouth back to hers, coaxing her lips open, and he made some little sound that was swallowed up by her mouth.. Apparently he was now an expert at kissing after having done it for a few minutes, because this time it was very, very good. He lowered the hand that had been pressed against hers, and she kept hers in his hair, hesitantly moving her fingers through the loose silky curls. After a few seconds she brought her other hand up and tangled all her fingers there, making a sound that was part resigned despair and part unwilling desire.

Sherlock seemed fine with it though, bringing his hands to her breasts, tracing the contours of them with the tips of two fingers. He broke the kiss to watch her as he touched her, her eyes closed and deep shallow breaths making her breasts rise and fall. He reasoned that since this was a done deal he might as well satisfy his curiosities while he helped things move along, and lowered his mouth to a breast.

Molly laced her fingers behind his head, holding his mouth there, experiencing a kind of helplessness
she’d never felt before. Sherlock closed his lips over her nipple, felt a detached interest in the way it hardened against his tongue, felt her shiver and the warm skin pucker beneath his mouth. It occurred to him he would probably be doing something to the other breast, if this were normal circumstances, so he covered it with his hand, gently cupping and squeezing, noticing abstractedly how it fit perfectly in his palm, as his partially erect cock pressed against Molly’s smooth, soft thighs.

Was this how it felt, for other people? He wondered. Everything in him seemed to ache and burn and he fully understood, for the first time, the primal instinct to bury oneself inside a woman. It was a pointed reminder of why he abstained, why he’d locked all that far away in his mind. There was so much to process. He was narrowing his focus to one specific thing at a time, because he knew it he tried to take it all in at once he would be overwhelmed with information. Forced as it was, it would probably be the only time he ever had sex (he knew Moriarty, knew this would be a one-off, the man did not like repeating himself) and he was going to learn everything he could and then carefully put it away.

Molly’s hands moving down to his shoulders pulled him out of his thoughts, and he looked up, startled, to see her watching him. She gently pushed him off her and onto his back, and before he could ask her if something was wrong she’d grasped his cock firmly in one hand and slid her hand up, once, then slowly down again.

Sherlock gasped, her touch setting him off again. She stroked him, gliding her hand firmly up and down, and he instinctively arched his hips. He hardened in her hand almost immediately, but Molly continued, until he hurt so much he couldn’t prevent a moan from leaving his lips.

“Molly,” he said, voice harsh and laced with need. Good God. How did men who let themselves get lost in desire ever get anything else accomplished? His work would suffer unspeakably if he gave in to feelings like this all the time. And if he did it once, he’d want to keep doing it. The addictive powers of hormones and neurotransmitters were a siren song that most men didn’t seem able or willing to resist.

He realized he was doing what he’d railed against Molly for earlier: thinking too much. The more she touched him, however, the less of a problem that became. In fact…

“Molly, stop!” He gasped suddenly, pulling her hand away, breathing ragged. He saw her look of concern, of hurt, and gave her hand a reassuring squeeze. “It’s… I almost..” he said, and she nodded in understanding.

She stretched out on her back, legs apart, and he carefully settled between her thighs. He leaned down to kiss her again, a soft kiss that was not love but meant…something, and looked into her eyes, a question in his.

She nodded. “I’m ready,” Molly whispered, hands moving up to rest on his shoulders. “I’m ready, Sherlock.”

He nodded back, then took an unsteady breath as she took his cock in her hand and positioned him. Their eyes locked as she slowly guided him inside her.

Both of them gasped from the sensation. Sherlock reached a hand up and gently smoothed some hair away from Molly’s face, then slid his fingers down her cheek. Molly felt tears well up in her eyes. She would never have imagined he was capable of so much tenderness. He leaned down and ghosted his lips over her eyes, kissing her eyelids, and it just made her want to cry even more.

“Molly,” he whispered, and she would have sworn there was pain in his voice. Pain for her.
He kissed her as he moved inside her, a long, easy kiss designed to distract her from her hurt. She let him do it, let her love for him be enough for them both, kissing him back with everything she might not ever have the chance to express this way again. Her arms slid around his shoulders as he quickened his pace, the movements more erratic, the kiss more intense. She moved with him, touching him in all the ways she’d only dreamed of, because he wanted her to and she needed to so she wouldn’t lose her sanity in this fragile moment.

He was amazed he’d been able to control himself for so long. But he’d held himself in check until some of the sadness had left her, and she was more like her normal self. His pathologist. His friend. Now he felt everything in him gathering speed and he was heading for the edge. But he wasn’t afraid.

Molly always kept him safe.

He gasped her name as he came, shuddering and pouring himself into her body and heart. She held him tight, feeling her heartbeat race along with his, tasting tears and skin from where she had kissed him.

“Sherlock,” she whispered, her voice sad but filled with love and that strength he knew she had, and he lay still inside her, resting his damp body on hers, relieved that the glue had held and they would survive this.
Moriarty tells Sherlock and Molly he's going to do a tarot reading.

I know this is short, but I wanted to give all my wonderful readings something after 6 weeks. Next part will be much longer.

Moriarty’s cheerful voice crackled over the intercom. “Hey, kids! Ready for some new fun?”

Molly frowned and put her book down. Sherlock had stopped playing the violin as soon as he’d heard Moriarty’s voice. “Your definition of ‘fun’ leaves much to be desired,” he told the Madman. “Now, now, Sherlock, don’t be that way. After all: I’m sure you had a lovely time making muskrat love with our Molly 10 days ago!”

“It was 11 days ago,” Molly said flatly.

“And she isn’t ‘our’ Molly,” Sherlock said, equally flatly.

“Oh! Want her all to yourself, do you? Then why haven’t you shagged her again?”

Sherlock glared. “This may come as a disappointment to you, Dear Jim, but I’m not inclined to shag anyone. Especially not under the circumstances.”

Moriarty sighed heavily in exaggeration. “Sorry, Molly. I tried.”

“I don’t want to shag him either,” Molly said.

“Liar,” Moriarty spat.

Molly ignored him.

“Well as lovely as all this talk of shagging is, we’ve got more important things to do. It’s time to kick the game up a notch, my dears,” Moriarty said gleefully.

Molly sighed. “Stealing eggs and making a porn film not enough for you?”

She had the distinct feeling that she’d surprised both of them by making the comment, a fact Moriarty, at least, confirmed with his low whistle.

“Oh, my! Mousy Molly is no longer quite so mousy! You’re a good influence on her, Sherlock. And her on you. I knew this was a match made in Heaven. Your fan club is coming to fetch you in five, so you know what to do!”
Sherlock sighed now, getting up to get their handcuffs. Molly watched him, thinking back to the day they’d… that day.

When it was over, they’d lain together for what felt like an eternity to Molly. She’d half expected Sherlock to withdraw from her, to shut himself back into his head. But she’d underestimated him. He had held her close and traced element abbreviations from the Periodic Table on her back, his expression thoughtful but not cold. She had been silent, knowing what it had been but not wanting to break the illusion. For just a few minutes she could imagine this would’ve been how it happened if they’d chosen it, if they were in London in her flat or his.

She’d waited for Moriarty to ruin it: to come over a loudspeaker cackling or make up some stupid rhyme about it or something. But he hadn’t. He’d personally come down with their handlers to get them, but he hadn’t said a word. Just looked at them both as though they were a puzzle to him he was trying to solve, tossed them clothes, and left. That worried her more than if he’d acted like a demented child about it like he did most other things.

The feel of metal on her wrists brought Molly back to reality. She looked up at Sherlock as he clicked the other cuff into place. For a moment she wondered about what kind of life they had right now, where she was grateful to Sherlock Holmes for putting handcuffs on her so she didn’t need to do it herself. She wasn’t sure why it bothered her so much: the thought of cuffing herself. Maybe, because it was Sherlock, she somehow felt safer.

She soberly reminded herself of what a comical delusion that would be.

They were led down that same hall again and taken to the white door. It opened into a sparsely furnished room, completely white. Two heavy, ornate white wooden chairs sat on opposite sides of an equally massive white wooden table, with an even more ornate white chair at one end. It looked like it was cut from marble and resembled a throne. It made Molly’s insides clench.

A large white wooden chest sat near the marble chair. The lights were bright and only served to emphasize the feeling of vastness, of falling. Their clothing was the only splashes of color to be found.

They were taken inside and seated in the wooden chairs, restrained to them by the wrists and ankles. They were close enough to the table to touch it, and the wrist restraints afforded them some movement of their hands.

Sherlock frowned. Obviously they were meant to be able to touch the table. Rest their hands on it, even. But he couldn’t see anything in the room to indicate why. It would have to wait. Moriarty would make it known. He always did.

The man in question entered a few minutes later, carrying a small white leather bag and wearing a white suit and tie. He sat the bag near the marble chair and looked them over.

“Bit cheerful for you, isn’t it? All this white?” Sherlock asked.

“It doesn’t suit you,” Sherlock said, and it elicited a chuckle.

“Oh, Sherlock,” he said, beaming at the Consulting Detective. “You and your jokes. So delightful. Now that we’ve gotten the sex out of the way, it’s time to delve into something a bit more metaphysical, and just a teensy bit more stimulating. Not that I didn’t enjoy watching it, of course. You were almost sweet, Sherlock. I suppose you have changed some after all.”
“What are you on about today?” Sherlock snapped. “I’ve little use for your riddles now any more than I did before.”

“Today we’re going to do an experiment in divination,” Moriarty said, his sharp hooded gaze flicking from Sherlock to Molly.

“Divination?” Molly asked.

“Yes. We’re going to see if tarot readings really come true.”

“That is the most ridiculous thing you have ever said,” Sherlock told him.

“Is it?” Moriarty said with a smile. “Well. Let’s just find out, my dear. Let’s just find out.”

He opened the bag and withdrew a small white silk pouch, slowly pulling out the cards. Sherlock looked at them as Moriarty began to shuffle but couldn’t make out the set.

“Custom name, especially for me,” Moriarty told him, seeing him look. “Commissioned an artist to paint pictures from some photographs. Then paid to have them made into a deck. Cost me 20,000 pounds, these cards did. But I wanted them to be just right and money isn’t important when it’s a question of things being right.”

“A waste of money no matter what they cost,” Sherlock said contemptuously.

Moriarty ignored him and finished shuffling. “Now. This reading is going to be a little different from your ordinary reading. Each of you gets a card. You can look at what it is. At any time during the reading, you can use your card to change your futures. But you only get one each, so you’d better make them count.” So saying, he slid a card to Molly and then one to Sherlock and smiled.

“Let’s get going, shall we? No time like the present.”
Moriarty slowly dealt out eight cards in a single row in front of him. Then he sat down and directed two of his men to bring the large chest over. Once they did, he leaned forward and caressed the first card briefly before carefully turning it over.

Sherlock’s eyes widened slightly. Molly gasped.

The picture on the card was a painting of Sherlock. He had a comical look on his face, as though he was reacting to something ridiculous someone had just said to him. The card was in color: a stark contrast to everything else in the room. At the bottom, written in elegant black script, it said: The Fool.

“Oh!” Moriarty exclaimed, voice tinged with surprise. “Didn’t think we’d see that one so soon, but there it is. The Fool, of course, can represent many things. Adventures, new beginnings, and possibilities. But it can also show someone who is ignorant, rash, and thoughtless.” He glanced at Sherlock with a sly smile. “You see why it had to be you, of course.”

“If you find me a fool, why am I here?” Sherlock asked him mockingly.

“You’re entertaining. It doesn’t mean you’re stupid, although at times you can be. It means you do stupid things. And that’s likely to continue, isn’t it. Shame on you, Sherlock. Being a fool has consequences. I’ll have to fulfill that future a bit now.”

Moriarty rose and opened the chest. He took out a riding crop. “Normally this would be Miss Adler’s domain, but since she has a soft spot for you, she’d likely not want to use it if she was here.” He moved over to Sherlock’s chair as three of his men dragged it away from the table. He looked down at Sherlock with another smile.

“I, however, have no such problem.”

He lashed out with the riding crop with swift precision, hitting Sherlock hard across the left pectoral muscle, a perfect blow between his collarbone and nipple. Sherlock jerked, breath hissing between his teeth. Moriarty didn’t give him a chance to recover before he repeated the action across the right side. Then he delivered two more strikes to each side, in methodical precision. Molly could only imagine the red welts on Sherlock’s pale skin as her face scrunched up in horror. He changed gears
and lashed out at Sherlock’s upper thighs, dangerously close to his genitals, and Sherlock could not suppress a cry as the next blow seemed to double in strength.

Molly looked at her card quickly. She opened her mouth to demand that Moriarty stop, but Sherlock shook his head at her.

“No,” he gasped as he was struck again. “Save it.”

Molly was torn. She wanted to help him. But part of her understood his request. This was likely just the start, and if she used her card now she’d be unable to stop something worse later. Her face scrunched up in misery as Moriarty worked his way back up, seeming to delight in Sherlock’s short, agonized cries. Then he stopped.

“Goodness, what a terrible future that was,” Moriarty remarked as Sherlock gritted his teeth to keep from moaning, trying not to give the other man any more satisfaction than what he’d had. “I hope for your sake that’s the end of you being the Fool, my dear.”

He casually tossed the crop back into the box. Molly stared at Sherlock, trying to tell how badly he’d been damaged. Moriarty seemed to have stopped just short of drawing blood; either that, or Sherlock wasn’t bleeding badly enough to show through his shirt. Either way, she knew firsthand how badly that hurt.

“Next card!” Moriarty said brightly in a sing-song voice. He turned it over and they all looked down.

This card had a picture of both Sherlock and Molly, walking side-by-side together down a street. Behind them, there were eight elaborate staves, formed to look like closed gates.

“The Eight of Wands,” Moriarty mused. “Positive goals, successful relationships…and a journey. Well. I think I know what that means. But it’s not quite time for that to happen. Maybe in a few days.”

“What does it mean?” Sherlock asked through clenched teeth.

“You won’t know that yet, silly. It’s your future!”

“I’d like a different diviner,” Sherlock said angrily. “You seem to be selective about revealing our future.”

“Life is very complex, Sherlock,” Moriarty said solemnly. “Let’s keep going, shall we? Only six cards left.”

The next card showed Molly lying in a bed, one hand over her eyes, the other resting over her heart. Ten ornate swords were piercing her body. Molly started to shake.

“Oh, dear. The Ten of Swords. Misfortune, failure, and pain. Sounds a lot like you, doesn’t it, Molly? After all, what has Sherlock ever brought you but heartbreak?” Moriarty asked with feigned sympathy.

“Stuff it,” Molly whispered, her hands clenching into fists.

“Well, best to get that out of the way now, don’t you think?” Moriarty asked. He stood up again and went to the chest as Molly’s chair was dragged away from the table.

“I can’t help but notice that you are manipulating our futures by making some outcomes happen now,” Sherlock said icily. “Not how that’s supposed to go, is it?” He asked as he turned his card
halfway up to look at it.

“The future is unpredictable, Sherlock,” Moriarty replied as he reached down into the chest.

“Yet you are supposedly ‘predicting’ it,” Sherlock said.

“I know. Lovely contradiction, isn’t it?” Moriarty asked cheerfully. He withdrew a black metal box with a gauge, a knob, and a switch. Attached to the box were wires with skin adhesives on the ends. Molly’s breath caught in a sickening cry.

Sherlock felt his jaw clench. He looked at Molly, an unspoken query in his eyes. She seemed to consider, but shook her head. There were still five cards left. The odds that all of them would be good were slim. He could tell she was terrified. And she had good reason. While he knew Moriarty wouldn’t kill her, electric shocks could be excruciating.

The electrodes were placed on Molly’s temples. Molly tried not to whimper but couldn’t quite manage it. Moriarty sat the box on the table and flipped the switch, causing the machine to hum to life.

“They still use this to treat depressed patients, you know,” he mused. “Very effective for some people. Of course, they’re under general anesthesia during the therapy. We’ll just use a teensy charge since you’ll be awake,” Moriarty told her, the look on his face obscenely friendly.

He turned the dial to two, and as Molly cried out he added: “But it’s still going to hurt.”

He turned it to zero again, and her head fell forward, breathing ragged. Sherlock watched her closely, monitoring her as best he could, as Moriarty repeated the process. Her head shot back like she’d been pulled by the hair. He turned the dial to three and Molly’s cry of pain became a full-fledged scream.

Only the knowledge that something even worse could be waiting kept Sherlock from making him stop. He watched helplessly as Moriarty turned the dial down again and turned to look at him.

“Look at her. Suffering because of you. Are you worth it, Sherlock? Are you worth all her pain?” He turned the dial again, to four, and Molly’s scream was deafening. Her entire body jerked and her face seemed frozen in an agonized mask. Sherlock felt a cold fear grip him. Desperate, he answered loudly: “no!”

“I’m sorry, what was that?” Moriarty asked, turning the dial down and up again. Molly screeched like she was dying, eyes rolling back in her head.

“I SAID NO!” Sherlock screamed as loud as he could. “I’m not worth it! Stop! Please!” He screamed again, and Moriarty slowly turned the dial back down. Sherlock swallowed down the lump in his throat as tears stung his eyes. “Please,” he begged hoarsely.

Moriarty nodded slowly, then turned the machine off. Molly sagged in the chair, head lolling on her chest, as the electrodes were removed. “Molly, look at me,” Sherlock said urgently. She didn’t respond. “Molly!”

Moriarty lifted her head and tipped it back. He gently opened one of her eyelids and checked her eye, then her pulse. “She’ll be all right,” he said. “We’ll just wait til she comes to before we continue. She won’t be out long. And before you have a meltdown, permanent damage doesn’t start until I turn it to at least six.”

“The fact that you know that, isn’t reassuring,” Sherlock rasped.
Moriarty didn’t reply, merely sat down and tapped his fingers on the table. About 15 minutes later Molly moaned and moved her head. Sherlock sighed in relief. She opened her eyes and stared at him blankly. “Sherlock?” She asked softly, fearfully.

“That’s over,” he said gently, and she almost sobbed.

“Nothing like a little therapy to help heartache,” Moriarty said as Molly slowly raised her head further, groaning. “Since you’re awake, time to continue.”

He quickly flipped the fourth card. This card had Sherlock on it. He looked as though he was frightened, eyes wide, mouth open in a soundless scream. Behind and beside him, piercing him, were nine swords.

“Another swords card! This one signifies suffering, injury, loss, and doubt. Hmm. Not quite time for that future to come to pass, either, I think,” Moriarty said. “Four down, four to go.”

The next card had both Sherlock and Molly again. They were standing in an embrace, looking at each other. Behind them was a golden chalice, and there was one on each side of them as well.

“Aww. The Three of Cups. Good luck in love and a happy ending,” Moriarty said sweetly. “What a break! Of course, Sherlock isn’t in love with you right now, but don’t take that badly, Molly. The winds of change are in the air and maybe some day it will happen. Since that one will be a while if it does, on we go!”

The next card showed Sherlock gazing up into the sky at night. The moon, swollen in its fullness, gleamed silver light down on his face. The bottom of the card said The Moon.

“Well, this is a rather unfortunate turn of events!” Moriarty said. “The Moon in the tarot shows deception and cheating. Guess that means your fortunes will be changing!”

He started to pick up the Three of Cups and Eight of Wands, stopping when Sherlock said: “What are you doing?”

“Deception and cheating. I’m taking your two very good future cards and replacing them with new ones.”

“You can’t do that!” Molly exclaimed.

Moriarty looked at her with a confused expression. “What part of cheating do you not understand?”

Only two cards left, and Sherlock still had his game-changer. Molly made a decision. “This part,” she said, and revealed her card. This card had Molly on it, outside on a beautiful day. In the deep blue sky, a golden sun blazed over her. At the bottom was written: The Sun.

Far from looking angry, Moriarty seemed delighted. “Oh! Well played, Molly, well played! Success, joy, fulfillment… very well. The Moon is canceled by the Sun.” Moriarty took her Sun card and added it to the bottom of the remaining stack, and left their two good cards untouched.

“One more card and then your final outcome,” Moriarty said. “Let’s see what’s next for you.”

The next card did not have a picture of either Sherlock or Molly. It had a picture of Moriarty, painted in various shades of red, a sinister smile on his face. At the bottom of the card it said: The Devil.

“Oh, my,” he said softly. “The Devil. Well, that certainly needs no explanation.” Moriarty looked at Molly. “I’m afraid there’s going to be some rain before you get your sunny day, my dear.”
He went to the chest and withdrew one item after another. Rubbing alcohol. A hospital flannel in a sterile package. Scissors. A sterile surgical needle and thread. A scalpel, forceps, a surgical file. The final item was an oscillating saw. Molly’s stomach heaved and she barely managed not to be sick, her face completely drained of color. Sherlock didn’t look much better.

“Don’t worry, these are just for demonstration,” Moriarty said. “The real job will be done in the operating room. I don’t like sloppy work.”

“What are you going to do to me?” Molly whispered.

“The future is give and take, Molly. You’ve got a little more giving to do before you can take. Something simple, I think: can’t completely negate the Sun, after all. How does a finger suit you?”

“What?” She gasped, horrified.

“Maybe a middle finger,” Moriarty mused. “That would keep it symmetrical.”

“YOU ARE INSANE!” Sherlock shouted.

“We’ve already covered that, Sherlock. Now, let’s see…”

“You’re forgetting something,” Sherlock told him.

“Am I?” Moriarty asked.

“Yes,” Sherlock said. He flipped over his card.

On the card was a picture of him. He was at the gallows, standing on the platform. A noose was around his neck. The Hanged Man.

Moriarty stared at it. “I wasn’t expecting that. But then, this is the future. Can’t predict everything.”

“Change, reversal, sacrifice,” Sherlock said, and Molly understood where he was going.

“Sherlock, no, you can’t—”

“Leave her,” he said, ignoring Molly’s plea. “You take mine instead.”

“Sherlock you can’t!” Molly cried. “Your music, your work…”

He turned to look at her. “And what about you?” He asked softly. “What about your music, Molly? Your work?”

“That’s—” she began, but the look on his face stopped her cold.

“Don’t,” he said furiously. “Don’t you dare say that’s not important, or that I’m more important than you. “You saved my life, Molly. And risked your career to do it. And you’re only here because of me. Do not ever tell me that. Everything about you is important, Molly Hooper.”

Tears streamed down Molly’s face. “Sherlock, you can’t…”

“I can, and I will,” he answered her. He looked at Moriarty. “My card stands. You take a finger from me instead.”

Moriarty slowly clapped his hands. “Bravo, Sherlock Holmes. How noble of you, offering to sacrifice yourself for Molly. Guess you’re still the Fool after all.”
“If I am a fool, I’m a fool with friends,” Sherlock said. “And that’s something you’ll never have.”

“Touché, pussycat. I’ll even do you a step further: I’ll let you choose which finger goes.”

“Sherlock, stop this!” Molly cried.

“No.” He glanced at his hands for a moment, spreading his fingers out, considering.

“Sherlock—”

“Enough, Molly,” Moriarty said. “He’s made his decision. One more word and your luck might change for the very worst.”

Molly sobbed. Sherlock held up his left hand. “The pinky, if you please,” he said coolly. “And I’d appreciate it if you didn’t taper the hand after. I like to keep my hands strong.”

“Step-off and broad palm it is,” Moriarty said. “Last card: the final outcome of the reading.”

He swept the items he’d placed on the table onto the floor and turned the card.

It was a picture of Sherlock and Molly, facing the front of the card, riding in a chariot drawn by two white horses. The Chariot.

Molly drew deep breaths, trying to control her sobs. Moriarty stared blankly at the card, then smiled almost wistfully.

“Journey, vengeance, perseverance. Sums it up. Ok, then. Thanks for playing, kids! It’s been fun!”

He nodded at them. “Take her back to their room, and take him to surgery. He’s got an appointment with destiny.”
My Sacrifice

Chapter Summary

The aftermath of Sherlock's sacrifice, and Moriarty reveals what he wants for his birthday.

Chapter Notes

Sorry this is short. There will be a long chapter next week!

They didn’t hear from Moriarty for three weeks. During that time, nothing happened to them. They were left alone in the prison of their room, except for Sherlock getting medical check-ups on his finger. They passed the time with more krav maga lessons for Molly, reading, talking (when Sherlock was tired of everything else) and playing music both separately and together.

When Sherlock was first returned to their room after the surgery, Molly had taken one look at his bandaged hand, burst into tears, and fled to the bathroom. Her sobs reverberated through the room and into the main suite. There was a time when Sherlock wouldn’t have understood why she was crying. He’d have told her it was his finger, not hers. But after John, after Reichenbach, and yes, after Molly, he understood that this was precisely the reason why she was crying. He’d gone in and knelt beside her, told her he wasn’t sorry. She’d cried harder. He’d told her she’d have done the same. She’d sobbed more. Finally Sherlock had just sighed and held her until she stopped.

She could barely look at him and speak to him that day, or the next. She felt so horrible and guilty, even thought she hadn’t been the one who’d done it and had begged him not to let Moriarty do it. Finally she started to come to grips with it, and realized that they just had to carry on. Bugger the keep calm part, though. She’d leave that for Sherlock, who was acting as though everything was fine even though he’d just lost a finger.

Well, fine was possibly a strong word. He was having a hell of a time with the violin, essentially retraining and adapting his fingers to having one less digit to use. He faltered, he swore, and he occasionally sat the violin down for a few minutes and took some deep breaths before he picked it back up again. But he never, not once, actually showed anger.

Sherlock would’ve been lying if he’d said he wasn’t feeling any anger over it. But he knew Molly felt horribly (irrationally) guilty over what happened, and he didn’t want to make her feel worse. His life had been so much simpler before he’d had people who cared about him; people who he cared about. But it had also, admittedly, been lonely. Just because he was an arrogant ass most of the time didn’t mean he liked being alone.

So he gritted his teeth and kept playing, first alone, then Molly accompanied him on the piano at his request. She was rather good, having taken lessons for 15 years, and had a deep passion for music that he understood and respected (even though some of what she called ‘music’ made him want to pull a face). She had spent years putting up with him acting like a prat, so fair was fair, he supposed.
Though he didn’t think he would ever be able to watch “American Idol” without shouting critiques at the telly.

On the 57th day of their imprisonment, they were in the middle of breakfast when Moriarty began to sing.

“Happy birthday to me, happy birthday to me, happy BIRTHday, dear JIIIIM, HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO ME!”

“Oh, dear,” Sherlock said with a sigh.

“Yes, kids, it’s my birthday today! And I wanted to spend it with you.”

“So what is it this time? Relay races? Knit you a scarf? Or did you maybe want to cut off my other pinky to make a tie pin?”

“Sherlock!” Molly exclaimed, aghast.

“I’m just asking, Molly,” Sherlock said.

“What a morbid sense of humor you have, Sherlock,” Moriarty said. “Nothing like that, thank you very much. No, I thought I’d give you two another new experience. Tonight, you’re going to a prom!”

“What?” Molly exclaimed.

“What is a prom?” Sherlock asked.

“It’s a formal dance, held in what Americans call high school. It’s a coming-of-age tradition for teenagers. We’re a bit late, but that doesn’t matter. You barely act like an adult and Molly is so sickeningly sweet she might as well be 16. It will be perfect!”

“I don’t understand,” Sherlock said. “It’s your birthday. Why would you want to make us go to a prom?”

“I’m a sucker for sap. No, that’s a lie, sorry. Inflicting physical harm can be amusing, but it gets boring after a while. Emotional harm is so much more interesting, isn’t it? And I promise you, this will cause Molly a lot of emotional harm.”

“Why?” Sherlock asked. He looked at Molly. She looked as though she was struggling not to cry.

“Oh, Sherlock. Don’t you know anything about your little pathologist? She dreamed of going to a school dance, ever since she was a little girl. She used to watch American movies about high school girls and proms and wished that she could go to one. But no one ever asked her to a dance in secondary school, or at university. So sad. But we’re going to fix that now. You’re going to take her to prom proper. And I get to watch the whole thing! Oh, I’ll have to get some popcorn. This will be better than any of those stupid movies she made me watch.”

“You said you’d love to watch them!” Molly managed to protest.

“I was trying to make you think I fancied you, you stupid bitch!” Moriarty shouted.

“Can’t you just go start an insurgency to celebrate your birthday?” Sherlock asked coldly.

“Did that last year. Boring.”
“You’re just trying to pay me back for being Saint Molly,” Molly said, trembling.

“Oh, ho. Not so stupid after all, I see. I can call you Ordinary Plus again. This isn’t up for debate, kids. Someone will be coming to get you early this evening, and it will all be pretty clear. Hmm… pink for Molly, definitely, and traditional clothes for you, Sherlock, I think. Well I have to get a cake and some decorations, so ciao for now!”

Sherlock looked at Molly. Her eyes were shut tight; her hands balled into fists as she fought to take slow, deep breaths. He waited until she had calmed some, then said her name carefully, questioningly.

“I told him that,” she whispered. “When he was ‘Jim from IT.’ I told him all about how I’d always wanted to go to a dance. He was so sweet. He said he’d have loved to take me to a dance.”

Sherlock slowly walked over to her and put his hands on her shoulders. She opened her eyes and looked up at him. “Molly. We got through everything else. We’ll get through this, too.”

She nodded. Sherlock cupped her face briefly before he lowered his hands. “Now. Tell me what happens at a prom.”
Pretty in Pink

Chapter Summary

Sherlock "picks up" Molly from Moriarty and the prom begins.

Chapter Notes

This chapter of angsty teenage throwback is dedicated to dietplainlite, aka soyeahso. Happy Anniversary!

If you haven't read her fic "That Dear Perfection," please give it a go. She is amazing and it is one of the best Sherlolly fics ever.

The final part of this arc will be up within 2 weeks.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Sherlock paced around the room for what felt like the hundredth time. In reality, it was the 57th time. It may as well have been the thousandth time, or millionth, though, because it would have had exactly the same results.

He and Molly had been separated nearly two hours ago. He’d been led to a plain room that contained a chair, a desk, and a full length mirror. It also had a loo. He’d been directed to shower, shave, and style his hair. Afterwards, he’d emerged to find that while he’d showered, clothing had been brought in.

He’d opened the garment bags. A tuxedo, black with white shirt and black tie. Diamond and platinum cufflinks. He looked at the label. Armani. So were the black wingtip shoes, polished and gleaming. Black cashmere socks. There was also a small clear plastic box on the desk. It contained a corsage made with dark pink orchids.

As he paced, dressed in his coerced finery, he kept glancing at the box. Molly had explained the protocol to him for a prom. The boy went to the girl’s home, presented himself to her parents, told her how beautiful she was. She placed the buttoner on for him, and he pinned on her corsage. Photos were taken, tears were shed, and the happy couple went off to dance, snog, and most likely drink and shag before the night was over.

He knew not all of that scenario was going to happen, but no matter what they were forced to do, it was a shameful knife Moriarty just wanted to twist in as hard as he could. The man was as perverse as he was insane, with sadism and fury gleaming in his eyes. Knowing him, he’d probably spent 10,000 pounds or more on this ‘prom’, considering it worth every bit just to shape their suffering to his whims.

The door opened and several of Moriarty’s men came in. “Let’s go,” one ordered. “And in case you think about being clever, we’re being watched. If you step so much as a toe out of line, she gets hurt.”
Sherlock stared at him stonily, snatching up the flower box and following them out. They took him down a few halls and turns, then stopped in front of an exact duplicate of a door to a house, complete with a doorbell. Sherlock’s jaw clenched slightly. He swallowed it down and rang the doorbell.

Moriarty answered the door, wearing a polo shirt and pair of trousers, his hair somewhat messy as it had been when he was playing Rich Brook. He beamed when he saw Sherlock. “Well! You must be that Holmes boy Molly keeps talking about. She’s so excited about this. Come on in and I’ll get her. She’s had such a time getting ready, I tell you!”

Sherlock shoved down the urge to spit in his face as he walked in. “Molly!” Moriarty called, moving into the room. “That nice young man Sherlock is here!”

The room looked like a family sitting room. Chairs, sofa, coffee table, even a telly. Moriarty gestured at a chair. Sherlock remained standing, staring at him. Moriarty raised his eyebrows and looked amused, but didn’t push it. Instead, he picked up a camera from the coffee table.

“Got to get some nice snapshots of you two of you!” He said with a smile. He took several quick pictures of Sherlock, then lowered the camera. “Molly,” he called again. “It’s not nice to keep your bloke waiting, young lady! Come on out!” There was an undercurrent of menace beneath the cheery tone.

Sherlock heard a door open. A few seconds later, Molly came into view. She was wearing a long, strapless pink dress with ornate gold embroidery on the bodice. The bottom flared out slightly and had more of the embroidery with several layers of crinoline. Her hair had been curled and hung in ringlets down her back and over her shoulders. She had more makeup on than Sherlock had ever seen her wear, even at that one Christmas party.

Her eyes stood out against the background of light blue and pink eye shadow and black eyeliner, and her mouth, which he had been cruel about in the past, was fuller and shiny under a coat of pale pink lipstick. She wore a simple heart-shaped diamond pendant on a gold chain with earrings that matched, and matching pink shoes with wedge heels that made her three inches taller.

She looked beautiful. And devastated. He could tell she had cried while she’d gotten ready; there were faint smears of eye makeup from where she’d wiped it off and reapplied it. She clenched a box in her hands that contained his buttoniere; a white rose with a small white lily tucked beside it.

Molly smiled at him, but he could tell by the tension in her that it was strained. Doubtless Moriarty had scripted her for this drama they were being forced to sell. And there was little he could do but follow suit.

He smiled back at her, hoping to put her more at ease. “Hello, Molly. You look beautiful.”

And she did, objectively, despite the makeup. Just because he didn’t allow himself to respond to beauty didn’t mean he couldn’t appreciate it. Molly wasn’t what most people would consider beautiful. But Sherlock wasn’t most people. Molly had amazingly expressive eyes, fine bone structure, and hair like a fairytale princess. She was also smart, trustworthy, and loyal. Those qualities were what truly made her beautiful, not some clichéd societal standard that she’d never match up with.

So when he told her she looked beautiful, he meant it. Even though he had to say it, it was the truth to him. He hoped she knew that.

Her eyes glistened, but she blinked hard a few times and shook it away. “Thank you. You look-amazing.” She moved toward him, still holding the box in a death grip. “I hope you like this.”
“It’s perfect.”

Molly’s hands shook slightly as she pinned the buttoner in place, but not so much that she accidentally stabbed him with the pin. Then he removed her corsage and pinned it on her dress. Moriarty took pictures as they did.

“That’s great. You two are so adorable. Now let me take some of you together. Put your arms around each other,” he told them. “I want to see the love.”

Sherlock squeezed her shoulder slightly as they posed themselves for their captor, forcing themselves to smile as he snapped photos. Finally he put the camera down and grinned.

“You kids have fun, now! Don’t do anything I wouldn’t do! Which, granted, leaves you a lot of options.”

Molly’s eyes misted again. Sherlock wasn’t about to have them lose their dignity on front of this sick madman, though. They were leaving with as much pride as they could. He extended an arm to Molly. “Shall we?” He asked.

She drew an unsteady breath, but nodded, placing her arm through his. He opened the door and they stepped into the hall.

They were escorted down two levels, to what Sherlock judged to be the bottom floor of this insane asylum Moriarty called his “Playground.” They were stopped in front of double doors that looked like doors leading into a school gymnasium.

“You’ll be alone in here, but the boss will be watching you and so will we,” one man said. “Doors will be locked but there’s a toilet in there. We’ll come to get you when it’s over.”

Sherlock pulled on the handle. The room was dark inside. Molly grabbed his other hand in one of hers. He curled his fingers around hers as they stepped in, the door closing behind them. They heard a key turn in the lock.

Suddenly, the lights came on at three quarters the brightness they were used to. Prom lighting was softer, Molly had told Sherlock. The room was huge; half the size of a school gymnasium. It was decorated with pink, blue, gold, and silver balloons, streamers, and banners. One large banner displayed the words “Moriarty High School Senior Prom.”

In the center of the room was a large table, covered with a gold tablecloth, with two blue metal folding chairs. It had a centerpiece of roses and orchids and glittery confetti was scattered everywhere. To the right, against the wall, was a table covered with food: finger sandwiches, cocktail sausages, fruit and vegetable trays, crisps, crackers, and dips. There were chocolate chip biscuits, fruit tarts, and a large crystal bowl of punch. Next to the punch bowl was a round cake with pink icing and white and blue roses made from icing. Written in big white letters in the center was "Molly and Sherlock's Prom." There were crystal goblets and plates, and pewter cutlery, along with a ladle for the punch.

Sherlock blinked. “And they enjoy this? It’s big and bright and dull. Nothing but chatter and giggling and hormones and intoxication. Ridiculous.”

Molly punched him in the arm. “It’s fun for them. For most people. Just because you’re not like everyone else doesn’t make everyone else an idiot. And don’t say it or I’ll punch you again.”

“I wasn’t going to.”
“Liar. God, Sherlock, I don’t want to be here either, but you don’t have to make me feel stupid for wanting this when I was a teenager. Why do you go out of your way to be hurtful?”

He sighed. “Truth isn’t always kind, Molly. But, I am sorry. I didn’t mean to hurt you.” He exhaled sharply. “No one would have gone to a prom with me in school, either, you know. They all thought I was an arrogant rude prat who couldn’t stop showing off.”

Molly raised her eyebrows at him. “Really? How could anyone ever get that impression of you?”

He smiled, knowing it meant he was forgiven. She smiled back. “So now what happens?” Sherlock asked.

Before Molly could answer, they heard music begin to play. It was a pop song, Sherlock knew that much, but he had no idea what. It was a man singing: “It's you and me and all other people/And I don't know why, I can't keep my eyes off of you” and Molly looked as though she was going to cry again.

Sherlock sighed, folding her against him. It was going to be a long night.

Chapter End Notes

The song is "You and Me" by Lifehouse.
Let Me Kiss It and Make It Better

Chapter Summary

The prom continues and ends.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

After a few minutes Molly calmed down, and he gently led her over to the table. He had her sit while he got them both some punch. She blinked in surprise at the sight of his goblet.

He shrugged slightly, taking a sip. “We’re following a stereotype. I’d rather do it correctly than deal with the repercussions.”

She took his cue and took a drink, gasping as she felt the heat of alcohol mingle with the fruity sweetness of the punch. “What’s in this?” she asked, feeling the burn slide down her throat.

“Cake vodka.” Sherlock took another sip. “Three Olives Cake Vodka, to be exact. Chambord, orange and raspberry sherbet, and lemonade. No wonder adolescents act like even bigger idiots than usual at a dance.”

“How do you know so much about alcohol?” Molly asked. “You rarely drink.”

“It’s part of my work. Alcohol is involved in many cases. Rather like tobacco, cologne, and perfume.”

“So what, one night you bought 5,000 pounds worth of alcohol and got pissed beyond belief?”

Sherlock looked affronted. “Hardly. One sip is all that’s required for me to make an association.”

“One sip of one hundred different bottles,” Molly smirked.

He scowled, then changed the subject. “We’d best get something to eat as well since we’re going to be drinking.”

Molly nodded. Sherlock surprised her by getting up and waving a hand at her. He returned with two plates. Hers had twice as much food as his.

“Your tolerance is lower,” he explained. “And alcohol creates hunger in most people.”

“Thank you. But, why are you getting everything for me?” she asked.

He raised his eyebrows. “It’s a prom, Molly. The boy is supposed to be a gentleman and do everything for the girl, is he not?”

“Oh. Yes.”

Sherlock rolled his eyes. “One drink of punch…”

“Oh, hush, Sherlock,” Molly said.
He sighed again. Definitely a long night.

The next 15 minutes was an uncomfortable, surreal affair. They ate and drank, and talked a little. Sherlock was trying to determine how Moriarty expected the night to play out, and Molly was trying to keep from getting more than tipsy. The songs all blended together; cheerful, upbeat songs about love and longing and other such romantic sentiment. It was the perfect prom… if it had been under completely different circumstances.

When the sixth song came on, the tempo marked it as a slow song. Sherlock promptly rose and held out a hand to Molly. “Obviously meant to be our first dance. Shall we?”

Molly stood up, then froze.

“Molly?”

The music stopped.

“Molly what is it?”

She bit her lower lip. “That song… it just…”

“Molly.”

Sherlock’s voice was soft, without a hint of scorn. “We have to do this. You can do this.”

She drew a shaky breath, then nodded. The song began to play again from the beginning. Slowly, she took his hand and let him lead her out to dance.

He wrapped his arms around her waist, pulling her close and moving against her with fluid grace. Her arms rested on his shoulders, trembling hands linking behind his neck.

When the lyrics started, Sherlock immediately understood why Molly had become so upset. Obviously the song meant something to her, but more than that was the cruelty of the lyrics. A male vocalist, singing about a special night with his lady love, where he would make love to her the way she wanted, when she wanted, for as long as she wanted, not letting go until she told him to. Exactly the sort of thing most any female would want to hear, and for all her awkwardness and atypical characteristics, Molly did have a romantic streak in her.

Molly fought to keep hold of herself. She wasn’t going to cry. She wouldn’t give that sadistic bastard Moriarty the satisfaction. Of course he knew. Sherlock either knew everything, or he missed something huge. There was no real in-between with him. Thank God this song wasn’t something she’d danced to with “Jim from IT”. It was bad enough that Moriarty had overheard her singing some of it in the morgue and was now using it against her.

Sherlock’s lips brushed her ear. “Tell me about one of your happiest memories.”

“What?” Molly asked, startled.

He pulled back to meet her eyes. “Tell me about a happy memory. We should be talking, shouldn’t we? We are at prom together.”

“Sherlock, thank you, but you don’t have to do this,” Molly said. She knew what he was doing; there was a time she’d not have thought him capable. The fact that he was, and was making the effort, threatened to make her cry for different reasons.
“I want to. So indulge me. It’s better than you being upset, isn’t it?”

He nuzzled his cheek against hers, and a watery laugh escaped her. She blinked back tears, but these were blessedly good ones.

“Well, when I was eight, my parents took us on holiday to America. We went to San Diego, California. Mum’s sister was living there with her husband. I’d never been out of the country before, so I was thrilled.”

Sherlock didn’t say anything, just kept her close as they danced. Molly continued.

“We went to the beach. It was amazing. The Pacific Ocean is so different from the Atlantic, you know. The water was so silver blue, and the waves were big and erratic. I was mesmerized. Mum had brought a huge bag of toys: bucket, spade, Frisbee, the works. But all I wanted to do was stand at the edge and stare into the water. I did that for probably an hour. Everyone just laughed and smiled. I didn’t care.” She glanced down for a few seconds, then met his eyes. “I wanted to be a mermaid. Just swim away, as far as my tail would take me.”

Molly expected him to roll his eyes, or look as though he regretted asking her. Instead, Sherlock looked thoughtful. “When I was a child, I wanted to be a pirate,” he said at last. “The idea of exploring the world, sailing away into the horizon, making discoveries…”

“Finding treasure?” Molly teased.

“I suppose so,” he allowed with a smile.

The song ended. Another slow song came on; Molly recognized it as “I’ll Be” by Edwin McCain. Moriarty obviously was going for a 90’s theme with the music for the prom. They continued dancing. Her hands weren’t trembling anymore. She sighed and gave in to the impulse to lean into him. “Thank you, Sherlock,” she said softly, looking up at him.

He nodded, not speaking, but not seeming to mind having her closer to him.

After a few more songs, Sherlock sat down and Molly went to the loo. She was washing her hands when she heard laughter. Female laughter.

She spun around, but no one was there. It sounded like teenage girls. They were giggling like mad. It was a recording, then, Molly realized. Then a girl’s voice spoke.

“Did you see that girl Molly? What a freak!”

“She’s so quiet. And she’s always looking at those weird books about dissecting and doing autopsies. Gross!” Another voice said.

“I don’t know why she’s even here. Like some boy is gonna dance with her,” a third girl said scornfully. “And kiss her? Forget it!”

Molly’s hands began to tremble again.

“She’s not even very pretty and she dresses like a dork,” the first girl said, laughing. They all started laughing. Horrid spiteful laughter.

Molly paled. She knew Moriarty just wanted to hurt her. But those comments…

She ran out of the loo and back to the table. Sherlock looked at her, alarmed by the sudden change in
her demeanor. “Molly?”

Molly’s breath hitched. Sherlock shot out of his chair. “What’s happened?” he asked, searching her face in confusion.

She took a deep gulp of air. “In the loo… Moriarty played a recording. It was three girls. They were talking about me. Laughing. Saying horrible things and I just…”

He cupped her face in his hands. “He’s just trying to upset you, Molly. It was just a recording. That’s all.”

“I know it was, but…” she felt the tears threatening to spill and blinked furiously. “The things they said… I’ve heard girls at school say similar things. When they didn’t know I was there.”

“What did these girls say?” he asked.

“That I wasn’t pretty, that I dress like a dork, and I’m too quiet and creepy and no boy would ever want to dance with me or kiss me…” her breath hitched again and a lone tear slid down her cheek.

“Molly. Look at me,” Sherlock said firmly.

She raised her eyes to meet his. They burned into her. “There is nothing wrong with how you look. Or the profession you chose. It doesn’t matter what other people think. Do you hear me?”

Molly nodded, but Sherlock could easily see she wasn’t convinced. What she described echoed some things that had happened to him in Sixth Form. His jaw clenched. Reason be damned, he was not going to let Moriarty win this round.

“I’m dancing with you, aren’t I?” he asked, brushing his thumbs under her eyes. “And had I known you at school, and had I been inclined to attend a dance and wanted to actually dance, I would have asked you over girls like that a thousand times over.”

Molly’s eyes widened. Before she could say anything else, Sherlock said: “and as for no boy ever kissing you at a dance…”

Molly barely had time to process what he’d said before Sherlock lowered his lips to hers.

This wasn’t how she’d imagined it. None of it. When she’d imagined kissing Sherlock on a dance floor (and yes, OK, she had, along with other places) it was never like this. Never because of a lunatic genius kidnapping them, a fake prom, or him trying to console her. Because that’s what it was.

But the fact that he cared that much made her decide that reality be damned, it was her kiss and she was going to take it.

His lips were nothing like her fantasies. They were better. So much better, because it was real. They were warm and soft and seemed perfect as they gently slid against hers. And it was different even from when they’d... she couldn’t explain how, it just was. His hands moved from her face to her waist, drawing her closer to him. Molly sighed, opening her mouth to his and bringing her hands up to tangle her fingers in his curls.

When the kiss was finally over (Molly had no idea how long it lasted) Sherlock looked down at her with one of the gentlest expressions she’d ever seen from him. “Better?” he asked.

Molly nodded. She started to thank him again, but he pressed a finger over her (slightly tender) lips.
“Stop thanking me, Molly. You are not a charity case.”

She nodded. “Right.”

“Come on.” He pulled her toward the food table. “I think some victory cake is in order, don’t you?”

Molly decided she’d never loved Sherlock Holmes as much as she did at that very moment.

The rest of the prom passed smoothly. They switched to water after one more goblet of punch each, and danced to another half dozen or so scattered songs. Mostly they sat and talked; her about why and how she became a pathologist, and him about his favorite cases. He even told her about his two stays in rehab: one when he was 19, and the other four years before he’d met John.

When some of their guards finally came to let them out, they were arguing over a recent paper published in a pathology journal. They looked up as the door was unlocked and four guards came in. “Party’s over,” one said as the music stopped. “Boss says you can go back with him instead of going ‘home,’ ” he told Molly.

Molly sighed in relief.

“Thank goodness,” she said once they were back in their room. “All I want is to get out of this dress, wash my face, and go to bed with you…”

She stopped, horrified, a blush rushing like wildfire over her face. She wanted to slap herself. He’d been so un-Sherlock tonight to make her feel better, and now she had to go and say this…

“No, not like that, I didn’t mean it like that, I mean, what I meant was…” she stammered, floundering.

To her immense relief, he raised his eyebrows. “Molly Hooper,” he said, voice warm with amusement. “You minx.”

Molly smiled at his retreating form as he headed to the loo.

Chapter End Notes

Special thanks to MizJoley, for the idea about the bathroom scene. I love you to bits!
Sherlock woke to find that, during the night, he and Molly had moved together and his arms were around her. This was, he recalled, known as “cuddling.”

He blinked a few times. Nothing changed. She was nestled on his chest, and his arms were loosely holding her close. One of her hands was tangled gently in his hair.

Well. This was interesting.

There were other times they’d moved next to each other on the occasions Sherlock slept. He was sleeping more here than he had since he was a child. Boredom and a lack of cases had taken a toll on him. Even though they filled their time with reading, talking (yes, he was doing more of that than ever, too; it was better than being completely bored), music, and him teaching Molly krav maga and how to improve her perceptual ability, it wasn’t what he was used to. He had no gun to shoot walls with, and pacing grew tiresome eventually. Sleeping helped pass the time.

On the even-less-than-pleasant side, so did the fights. Sometimes he and Molly quarreled. He’d say something insensitive, as he often did, and she’d give him a dressing down. It led to more snark from him, and it escalated until they stomped away from each other, huffing and hiding behind books or musical instruments. Eventually, one of them would start talking again (it was often him, to his surprise), the other would “hmph”, and from there it evolved into tenuous conversation and the re-establishment of their normal comfort with each other. The instigator would apologize (again, usually him; usually his fault), be forgiven, and all was right with the world.

Well. As right as it could be when one had been taken captive by a brilliant madman.

But this was the first time he’d put his arms around her as they slept; the first time he’d awakened to find them…cuddling. Yes, they’d “cuddled” before, of sorts; when they’d had their “cozy lie-in”, when they’d taken the LSD, and after they’d…well. Had sex, he supposed was what it should be called. It hadn’t been making love, nor had it been shagging.

But not like this. Not during sleep, with no drugs involved.

Her face looked peaceful. In sleep, they didn’t have to be trapped here, locked in a room waiting for Moriarty to take them away for another torment. They were free, living other lives in their dreams.
He shook his head, wondering where those fanciful thoughts had come from.

Molly’s lips curved into a slight smile in her sleep. He wondered what she was dreaming about. He wondered if she was dreaming about him. That thought started him more than even waking up with her in his arms had.

Yes. This certainly was interesting, he mused. Obviously a subconscious aftereffect of the previous night, and his urge to protect Molly from Moriarty’s cruelty in making them attend the ghastly fake prom. He’d become less of an arse where she was concerned since the Fall. And after Moriarty had brought them here, he’d also become more protective of her. Which was also only natural, he supposed, as it was, in a sense, his fault she was there.

His musings came to a stop when Molly stretched against him in her sleep; her hips pressing into his and her hand slipping down to his neck. Her skin radiated heat through her nightgown, and she felt soft and relaxed.

Which was, to his shock, more than he could say about his penis. It was suddenly hard and pressing insistently against the junction of her thighs.

Sherlock managed to control his instinct to leap out of the bed like a gazelle. He moved her hand off his neck and carefully started to pull away, not wanting to awaken her and have to explain…what? That she’d somehow managed to arouse him merely by pressing against him? No. It was just a normal physical reaction, he told himself. Elevated testosterone, the need to urinate… that’s all it was.

He’d only managed to move about six inches when she suddenly awoke, looking right into his eyes. He fought down the urge to gulp.

“Sherlock?” she asked, concerned. His expression was very odd. “What’s wrong?”

“Nothing,” he said roughly, and hastily cleared his throat. “Nothing is wrong, Molly. Why don’t you go back to sleep?”

Now Molly was even more worried. The medical professional in her quickly swept her eyes over him to look for evidence of a problem…and stopped short when she saw his cock bulging in his pyjama bottoms. Her eyes widened. He had a hard-on? He’d become aroused…by her?

She’d never been so simultaneously confused and pleased in her life. She felt her cheeks flush slightly, but kept her voice steady as she said: “I’m not really sleepy anymore…”

“Wonderful!” he exclaimed, sitting up and clapping his hands. “Breakfast will arrive shortly, and we can finish our discussion about parthenogenesis. I just need to, ah, dash to the lavatory first.”

Molly watched, bemused, as he sprang from the bed and walked quickly toward the loo. When he closed the door she sighed. It had clearly bothered him, being turned on by her. Well, in fairness to her, she imagined it had more to do with him being turned on in general than her, specifically. This wasn’t the place or time to have this discussion, though. She’d see what, if anything, happened later, once they were free.

Which could be months. Years. She sighed. Well, it would have to sort itself out when Sherlock was ready. If he ever was. Until then, she’d do what she did best. Keep calm and carry on.
Sherlock did his business quickly, washed his hands and dried them equally fast, then sat on the floor, his back against the wall, elbows on knees and fingers under his chin.

Of course he’d felt sexual arousal before. He dealt with it the same way he did other things. He shut it away in his mind. Some things shouldn’t be examined.

So why was he having difficulty shutting this away?

He shook his head. Molly was his friend. Yes, he could call her that now. She’d earned the right and the respect of it. She was also in love with him. And they were currently locked up by a madman. Not exactly an ideal time for erections, arousal, and the possibility that she might, after five years, mean something more to him.

He didn’t know if there was such a thing as an ideal time for that. The very idea that he was feeling…that sort of feeling was frightening. Even if it was Molly, whom he trusted more than anyone but John. He didn’t do feelings, sentiment, romance, sex…love.

Yes, all right, he did love John, and Mrs. Hudson. But that was the love of friendship, and an almost childlike adoration for a motherly figure. Not…this.

Why was he even swithering about what to do? He almost never had problems putting things in a room in his Mind Palace and closing the door; locking it if need be. He shouldn’t have been reluctant to do so now. Especially in light of what those feelings were.

He shook his head. This was neither the place nor the time. With effort, he moved everything into the room in his mind that was Molly’s. He closed the door, though he didn’t lock it. He’d revisit it, if needed, at a more appropriate time. Though when that time would be was something that not even he had an answer for.
Sherlock is disturbed by an apparent shift in his feelings for Molly, and a new game is about to begin.

Two months passed.

Moriarty came for them three times during those two months.

The first was to conduct some “pain tolerance tests”, as he’d called them. Turned out that “pain tolerance tests” was code for “how many times do I have to do this before they each scream.” The second was to test their skin sensitivity. That one was more clinical: electrodes and galvanic responses. The third was to have them go on a scavenger hunt, with clues based on facts about themselves.

Sherlock Holmes could safely say at this point that now, after being with her almost constantly for 140 days, he knew Molly Kathleen Hooper better than anyone. And he knew her as well as he knew John and Mycroft. And the same could probably be said in reverse. Molly already knew him well, and now she knew him better than anyone but his best friend and his brother.

Their days were filled with more of the same. They’d read nearly every book on the bookshelves. Moriarty was getting more for them, which meant he wasn’t letting them go soon. Sherlock had adapted to having only four fingers on his left hand, though he still occasionally faltered playing the violin. They listened to music, discussed everything from carbon dating to saffron and continued with Molly’s self-defense. Sherlock was pleased with her progress and said she'd be ready to move up a level in a few more months.

Their nights were mostly the same as well. Molly would go to sleep and leave him reading, thinking or writing. At some point he’d grow tired or bored and join her in bed. Occasionally, when he didn’t sleep for a few days, his food or drink would be drugged and he’d barely have time to reach the bed before he was out.

And at least once a week he would wake up and discover that they were in each other’s arms.

It didn’t make sense to Sherlock. It wasn’t sexual. Well, that wasn’t entirely true. He’d also awoken a few mornings feeling aroused. That didn’t make sense, either. He couldn’t attribute every occurrence to elevated morning hormones and a need to void his bladder. And there were odd random moments when he’d look at Molly-while she twirled a lock of hair, passionately argued a point or stared pensively at nothing in particular-and have that same strange, inexplicable wanting.

It was the circumstances, he reasoned. Hostage Syndrome, proximity, friendship, stress, pain, fear… there were dozens of external influences at play. But the problem with this simple explanation is that everything was happening backwards. Normally, lust came first, then attachment. And while there had been moments in their years of interaction when he’d felt a flash of attraction for Molly, it had always been easily suppressed. Why was this occurring backwards and why was it no longer so easy to control?
His first thought, that he was being drugged, was examined then discarded. Though Moriarty wasn’t above using drugs on them, they weren’t ongoing. They were for specific situations. He’d have nothing to gain here by inducing feelings through drugs. That would be an artificial triumph, and Moriarty wanted the genuine article in everything he did.

If it wasn’t Moriarty’s doing, and it wasn’t simply biological responses, there was only one conclusion. And Sherlock didn’t like it at all.

He realized all this in a rush of clarity one morning when he woke to discover that they were wrapped around each other once again. It wasn’t Molly. And that was the truth. He’d meant it when he’d told her she counted, he trusted her and that he’d rather have been forced to be with her if he had to make such a choice. No, this had everything to do with him.

There was a reason why that door remained closed and locked and the key hidden away at the bottom of a cupboard. Love was a distracting vagrant that might never leave if allowed to set up home in his heart. Sherlock knew himself. He knew it could addict him, consume him. How could he possibly love anyone, even Molly, and still function the way he wanted to? He’d never seen any way for it to be successful, so it had never been a consideration. It was the Work. Always the Work.

So why, when trying to move without waking Molly, did he feel a desire to simply let his mind wander while he breathed in her scent and remained in her arms?

He didn’t get the chance to consider it further. Moriarty’s cheerful voice rang out like a death toll over the intercom.

“Good morning, snugglebunnies! Time to wakey wakey!”

Sherlock pulled hastily away as Molly’s eyes opened, confused and wary. She sat up with a frown.

“Snugglebunnies?”

“Oh, my. Hasn’t Sherlock told you? You’ve been cuddling together in your sleep on occasion. So sweet. It almost makes me ill every time I see it. But it’s like a car crash: as horrible as it is, I can’t look away!”

“Is there a point to this little public service announcement?” Sherlock asked tightly, unable to meet Molly’s questioning eyes.

“Of course there is. Your breakfast is on the way. Then I’ll be taking you for a little experiment.”

“What sort of experiment?” Sherlock asked.

“It’s a surprise. Eat all your food, kids: breakfast is the most important meal of the day!”

The intercom clicked off. Molly sighed.

“When is he going to run out of things to do to us?”

Sherlock shook his head. “A mind like his? Could take months. Years, even.”

“Not comforting,” Molly muttered.

“It wasn’t meant to be.”

They ate breakfast in silence, both of them lost in thoughts as to what the newest experiment might be. Moriarty hadn’t mentioned Molly, so either she wasn’t a part of this, or her role wouldn’t come in
until later. Either way, it wouldn’t be good.

When they finished, Moriarty arrived with escorts. He didn’t make a direct appearance in every game he played, and the fact that he was here for this one meant that it had particular significance.

He grinned as Sherlock was handcuffed. “Off we go, then, Sherlock,” he said. “But first, give Molly a good luck kiss.”

Sherlock frowned. “Why am I giving her a good luck kiss? Your experiment is on me, not her.”

“True. But Molly gets to rescue you in this one. Well, hopefully. So you should give her a proper kiss for good luck.”

Molly looked uneasy. “What do you mean, hopefully?”

“Well, there’s always a chance you won’t, isn’t there? That’s what the kiss is for. Good luck. Honestly, don’t either of you know anything about dramatic convention?”

Molly opened her mouth to protest, and found her lips suddenly covered by Sherlock’s. Unwanted fear and arousal rushed through her, and she quickly kissed him back before Moriarty could get displeased by her simply standing there.

“Lovely,” he purred as they drew apart. “I’ll be in touch, my dear. Let’s go.”

As Sherlock was taken away, the icy hand of fear clenched tight around Molly’s heart.
The game continues in a new and terrifying way for Sherlock.

Warning: disturbing chapter ahead. No violence or death, though.

Thank you, Miz-Joley, for all the feedback and encouragement.

I'm on tumblr: sherlolly.tumblr.com

They had walked only halfway down the hall before Sherlock twisted to look at Moriarty. “What sort of experiment-”

He felt the needle jab his arm a second too late.

Sherlock awoke to silence and utter darkness.

He felt groggy. Aftereffects of whatever he’d been drugged with. He thought he merely needed to open his eyes, but he was startled to discover that his eyes were open. His first thought was that he’d been blindfolded, but he almost immediately realized that wasn’t the case. Wherever he was, it was completely dark. He might as well have been blind.

He focused his attention outward, struggling against the sluggishness. As it began to clear away, he began making deductions.

No sounds. Not even an air vent, although he knew there must be something supplying him with oxygen. No smells, either. He was sitting upright in a chair, fully clothed, but was not bound to it. A ripple of unease prickled his skin. Without his senses, he was helpless.

No. Not helpless. He could feel. That was something. He struggled to his feet, grasping the arms of the chair for support. Cautiously, he placed a foot forward and slowly, experimentally, sat it down. Solid, still. Metal. Thick.

Using this slow, careful method, he began to move forward, arms extended, one in front of him and one to the side. When he’d moved about 2 meters the hand in front of him made contact with smooth, cool metal. He planted both hands on it, slowly moving them, testing the boundaries.

It went higher than he could reach the edge of. The surface was the same wherever he touched: smooth, cool, not the faintest scratch or dent that he could feel. He slowly traced it and discovered that it was round, about 4 meters in diameter. As the last of the drug cleared, he realized with curiosity and apprehension where he was.

Moriarty had placed him inside a sensory deprivation tank.
He took a deep breath. All right. It was… disconcerting. Lacking data from every sense but touch wasn’t something he’d ever encountered before. But now that he knew what it was, he’d be fine.

It was just so dark. And quiet.

Then he remembered that Molly was supposed to rescue him. From what: the tank? No. Moriarty wasn’t just going to keep him in here like this until she found him. There was something else going on.

So very dark and quiet.

He became aware of a slight increase in his pulse and respiratory rate. He swallowed hard. The blackness and the silence seemed to weigh down on him, pressing into his skin. He shook his head fiercely. That was not a rational thought. Why would he think that?

His breathing grew louder in his ears. A trickle of sweat ran down his brow, sliding over his face until it disappeared at the collar of his shirt. At least his gasps were something to hear; something to fill his ears besides the eerie absence of sound.

Wait. Gasps? He was gasping for breath?

Lack of air?

No.

NO.

Panic, raw panic as blind as he was, gripped him.

He fought to control himself as a wave of fear washed over him. Another rivulet of sweat popped from his forehead and inched its way down.

He’d been drugged. With something other than a sedative. Something that induced fear and paranoia. And whatever it was, was strong.

Stronger than he could resist.

The fear rapidly coalesced into terror; stark white terror, a horrifying contrast to the darkness.

He struggled to remain calm, but he couldn’t manage the deep breaths necessary to slow his heart. All the blood drained from his face and he began to shiver, despite the warmth of the tank.

He was alone. Imprisoned in a metallic tomb. Deprived of sight, smell, taste and external sound, left with a fear that he could neither contain nor control.

What if Molly couldn’t find him?

Madness licked at the edges of his mind before taking a long, slow swipe directly up the center of his brain.

Sherlock Holmes, who normally feared almost nothing, flung his head back and screamed.

He charged the tank in a blind fury, pounding on the side with both fists clenched tight. The dull metallic thuds seemed to mock him. After half a dozen blows he unclenched his hands, pressing his fingertips so hard against the unyielding metal he could almost see their corpse-like paleness despite
the dark.

“Let me out,” he gasped, not caring and only partly knowing what he was doing. “Let me OUT!”

There was no reply at all. Only more of the silence.

_No, _he ordered himself. _Stop this. Fight it._

But he didn’t know how. It was Dartmoor all over again, but worse. Far worse. Even though this time he knew it was drugs, so far down the path was he that even this knowledge didn’t show him a way back. He was his own blind self, trying to lead his equally blind irrational self.

_When the blind lead the blind, both fall into the ditch…_

“No,” he gasped, panting. “No, I won’t!”

He sank to his knees, rocking back and forth as he’d done when he was a child, wrapping his arms around himself. A plaintive whimper echoed in the air. It took a few seconds for him to realize the sound had come from him.

He’d sampled many things in his life. The delirium of cocaine, the sweetness of morphine, the tang of fine wine and the beauty of music. Even fear, from Dartmoor. But never had he tasted anything like actual terror. It was oily and vile and left a sour coppery flavor that made his stomach threaten to heave up its contents.

He continued to sit, rocking and hugging himself, the occasional whimper tearing itself from his throat. His mind felt like a rubber band: stretched taut and thin and one breath away from snapping. How long could he hold on? And where was Molly?

Molly. He pictured her: her earnest face, her warm brown eyes, her devotion, loyalty, and yes, even her love. He let her fill his thoughts, every nook and cranny; sweeping out the cobwebs and monsters of insanity and filling the space with the oasis that was Molly Hooper.

Molly always kept him safe. He had to remember that. Believe that.

He shivered, fingers wrapped tightly against his skin, rocking faster. And in the dark stillness, as he thought about the way she always smiled when he came into the morgue, his lips parted and his breathing slowed enough for him to whisper:

“Molly. Help me. Please help me.”

……………………………………

Molly was pacing when the door to their room opened and Moriarty and several guards stepped in.

“All right, Miss Molly! Time to see if you can be the heroine in this part of the story,” Moriarty said with his usual wide grin.

“What story? What the hell have you done to him?” Molly demanded charging up to him.

A guard grabbed her arms, handcuffing her as Moriarty leaned forward to rest his lips near her ear and whisper to her.

“Once upon a time, there was a consulting detective and a pathologist. They were kidnapped by a consulting criminal. And it was _ever so_ fun! One day, the consulting criminal wondered if he could make the consulting detective snap. So he gave him _ever so many_ drugs, and placed him in a sensory…
deprivation tank.”

“You fucking-” Molly snarled, trying to kick him. He laughed, grabbed her arms and pulled her close, and continued whispering to her.

“But he wanted to be fair, the criminal did. And so he allowed the pathologist the chance to try and save the detective. Because you see, the drugs he’d given the detective…well… they had just a few teensy side effects without the antidote. Increased paranoia and fear progressing to insanity. Pure, bright insanity eventually leading to, well, catatonia.”

All the blood drained from Molly’s face. She started to shake harder than she’d ever shook in her life.

“Just think. That mind, that beautiful, brilliant mind, trapped inside a useless body. What a terrible tragedy. And of course, still alive, so technically the criminal would be keeping his promise to let them both go alive.”

“But maybe, just maybe, the pathologist would get to him in time. Give him the antidote and save his life again. She’d saved it before, after all. But could lightning strike twice?”

Molly forced down her terror and fury. “What do I have to do?”

“Oh, that’s simple,” Moriarty said, face friendly and smile bright.

“You’re going to run, Molly. You’re going to run like Sherlock’s life depends on it.”
She was led outside and they walked west. This was new. As they rounded the corner of the grey, utilitarian-looking building Moriarty called his “playground”, they were confronted by a low hedge row. It was in a U shape but with sharp corners, and stretched for what seemed like a quarter of a mile. Molly understood and her stomach twisted.

“It’s a maze. I have to solve a hedge maze.”

“Very good, Miss Ordinary Plus. I remember you saying once how much you loved mazes. So I decided to create this little labyrinth.”

They reached the entrance. Moriarty spoke to her again. “Here’s the deal. You’ll be released to run. I know you won’t try to get away; not with your precious Sherlock’s life at stake. The end of the maze leads to a door to the room where he’s being kept. In that room you’ll find a ladder and a syringe with the antidote ready to go. By my calculations, you have thirteen minutes to solve the maze and get the antidote in Sherlock before it’s too late.”

A guard began unlocking Molly’s handcuffs. Moriarty smiled. “Wasn’t it wonderful that I had Sherlock give you a good luck kiss?”

As Molly was freed, Moriarty’s smile twisted into something savage and maniacal. He brought his face within an inch of hers. “Now run, little Molly Hooper,” he hissed.

Molly ran.

She entered the maze and quickly looked both ways. Exactly the same. Remembering the typical pattern of most mazes, she went right, around a corner, another corner, and was confronted again with right or left.

Her mind was overwhelmed with “what-ifs” and panic. She shook her head. No. She couldn’t do this! Sherlock’s future depended on it. She forced herself to take deep breaths, in the nose and out the mouth. She pushed everything out of her mind except the maze with more effort than she would’ve thought herself capable of. *Sherlock needs you. He trusts you.*

With those thoughts at the back of her brain, she cleared her mind again and ran.
Left this time, then down and around and left again. The ground was slick with dew and made her slip and few times, but she plowed on.

She hit her first dead end three rows later. Instead of panicking, she mentally re-drew the maze in her head, adding this new information to determine where to change her path. She almost smiled as she did.

What she hadn’t told Moriarty while he was “Jim”, and what he apparently didn’t know (and why would he), was that Molly had a very spatial mind. She was good with patterns. She’d never struggled with unfolded blocks on paper, and had amazed her parents by solving a Rubik’s Cube two days after she got it.

Jim Moriarty had used her on those “dates” as a way to get to Sherlock. But he didn’t know the real Molly Hooper. Now she was going to use this arrogance and indifference to use him.

She ran again.

With every step she took, every corner she rounded, she changed the maze in her head, adding the rows and turns. Each dead end she erased, re-drew and backtracked, and each step brought her closer. She didn’t have a watch but Moriarty had “thoughtfully” placed clocks throughout the maze.

Eight minutes left.

Two more wrong turns and a dead end, but she refused to give in to panic.

Six minutes.

Retracing after another dead end, she saw a long passage to the left and the indistinct shape of a building. She ran so hard she thought her lungs would burst.

Five minutes.

Molly exploded into the building. She barely stopped to look around before she raced through the only doorway. Down a hall, another hall to the right, hall after hall she ran through like a mouse in a maze, and through a metal door. As soon as she entered, a voice came over a loudspeaker.

“Four minutes.”

This room contained a huge round metal tank: too tall for her to safely jump down into. She found a rope ladder and syringe Moriarty had promised would be there, quickly pocketed the syringe and swab, and grabbed the ladder, half-dragging, half-carrying it to the tank.

“Three minutes.”

She climbed the attached metal ladder, turned the wheel with trembling hands, adrenaline fueling her strength, and threw the hatch open. From the light in the room she could barely make out Sherlock’s prone body on the tank floor. Her heart hammered as she lifted the ladder, attaching it to the hooks and hurling it down into the tank, barely giving it time to unfurl before she started down.

“Two minutes.”

She let go and fell the last few feet, raced to Sherlock’s side and dropped down to her knees. She swabbed his arm, tapped the syringe, and plunged the needle into his cold, clammy skin. Only then did she throw it across the tank and gather him into her arms.
“One Minute.”

“Sherlock?” she asked anxiously. His eyes were closed and he was limp against her, breathing shallow but steady. She pressed a hand to his head. Clammy and cold. “Sherlock, can you hear me?”

He didn’t respond. A sob tore from her throat. “Sherlock Holmes, you fucking say something, you hear me?” she cried. “Come on. Anything. Sherlock, you can’t, not, now, please…”

Molly rested her cheek on top of his head and sobbed. She’d failed him. She’d tried so hard only to fail him when he needed her. Now he’d be trapped inside himself for the rest of his life, and it was all her fault…

“Molly…”

She gasped, looking down. Sherlock’s eyes were open, cloudy, but he could clearly see her. She felt him stir slightly against her and sobbed again, this time from sheer joy.

“Molly?”

She didn’t say anything. She couldn’t. She was too busy laughing and crying hysterically, clutching him tight. Her tears fell on both of them but she didn’t care.

She pulled back finally to look at him, examining him with a clinical eye. He was speaking, able to slightly move at least, but was he going to be all right? Had he suffered any permanent effects because she’d saved him by a literal minute?

As if in answer to her unspoken questions, the voice came over the loudspeaker one more time.

*Sherlock Holmes has been saved.*

“Molly,” Sherlock whispered. “Am I…”

“Yes, Sherlock,” she whispered back, impulsively giving him a soft kiss on the lips, her salty tears on both their skin. “You’re safe.”

He looked into her eyes and nodded slightly. The lines of his face relaxed.

“I knew you’d come,” he murmured. “I knew you’d save me. I…”

He nodded off. Molly laughed softly, triumphantly, wiping her tears off of them. They sat there, Molly rocking him in her arms as he slept, waiting for Moriarty to come get them.
On the 217th day of their imprisonment, Molly looked up from a book. “You really have to admire the Egyptians. Their embalming techniques were far ahead of their time.”

Sherlock glanced up at her from his own book. “Please tell me you aren’t about to give me that line about how beings from another world gave them a helping hand.”

“What, you don’t believe there could be life on other planets?” Molly asked.

“No; I do believe the possibility exists. It’s the part about them coming to earth and mucking about that I don’t agree with. Only human arrogance would imagine that out of countless worlds, advanced beings decided to teach us how to build pyramids, make crop circles and tend to the dead.”

Molly smiled. “Don’t be shy, Sherlock; tell me what you really think.”

He quirked an eyebrow at her. She winked at him and went back to her book. He huffed in quiet laughter before he did the same.

There was a time when Molly Hooper wouldn’t have winked at him. There was a time when he wouldn’t have been amused if she did. But they weren’t the same people they’d been seven months and a day ago. Their time together, combined with the horrors they’d endured at Moriarty’s hands, had changed that. Changed them.

Neither of them brought up the way they awoke with their arms around each other. If both of them awakened at the same time, they began an awkward dance of averting their eyes and carefully moving away, one of them hurrying off to the toilet or murmuring an apology.

And if Sherlock’s eyes lingered for a few seconds on Molly at times, he told himself he was just deducing her. And if Molly stared just a second too long as he stretched or came out from a shower, she told herself it was just because she was relieved they were both still more or less OK.

It was an unspoken agreement. While neither of them was exactly denying things were different, it was left unspoken. If, and when, it would be brought into the open was a mystery Sherlock wasn’t sure he was ready to solve.

Before either of them could turn to the next page, Moriarty came over the intercom.

“I’m coming to see you in 5 minutes.” He clicked off.

Sherlock and Molly looked at each other. This was different. No cheery greeting, no snide remarks, no announcement of an “exciting” new experiment. It was puzzling and alarming.

They followed the routine as usual, though; Sherlock handcuffed Molly and then himself. They stood in the center of the room, the waiting stretching out for what felt like years.
Moriarty came in with his usual dozen or so men. He was dressed all in black save a crisp white shirt. He walked up to them. “I’m letting you go,” he said without preamble.

They stared at him, stunned.

He smiled. “Of course, I have to give you a send-off in my own special way, though. So it will be about two weeks first. But today we start the ball rolling.” He sighed. “I am going to miss you two crazy kids.”

“Letting us go?” Molly echoed in disbelief.

“Why now?” Sherlock asked.

“There’s nothing left I need to do,” Moriarty replied. “Besides, I want you to be home for Christmas. That’s the best gift I could give you, isn’t it?”

He stepped closer and kissed first Sherlock, then Molly, on the lips. “I have enjoyed these little games of ours,” he said. “What fond memories I’ll have. But everything has to end sometime.”

He smiled. “Well. Since the sedative is probably about to kick in for both of you, I think we’d best end this conversation while you’re both conscious. Besides. I was never one for long goodbyes.”

“You-” was as far as Sherlock got before he felt himself fading into oblivion.

Thirteen days later

The first thing Molly was aware of was that she was cold.

Shivering hard, she opened her eyes, and realized several other things. Everything was fuzzy and her head felt too large for her neck. Drugged. But she could tell she was naked and in the woods, and Sherlock was next to her. They’d been covered with an orange fleece shock blanket. Her chest hurt a bit and her side felt odd, but other than that she seemed to be OK.

Woods.

He’d done it. Moriarty really had set them free.

She blinked trying to clear her vision, raising her head up slightly to look around. On the ground about half a foot away from her left hand was a folded piece of paper; and a little further, a mobile phone. She turned and looked at Sherlock. He was still unconscious.

“Sherlock,” she said groggily, shaking him. He didn’t wake. Molly decided it was better to call for help now; she could keep trying to rouse him while they waited. Before she reached for the phone, she grabbed the piece of paper and unfolded it. It was a handwritten note.

Dear Sherlock and Molly,

If you haven’t already, soon you’ll be making a few discoveries. No doubt you’re wondering why I’ve done it. It’s simple. It’s my gift to you. Molly did have the Sun card, after all. Not to mention your other lovely cards. And mine, of course. So how to bring it all about, I wondered. Then the solution to the problem came to me.

I want the two of you to always be close. Side-by-side, best of friends, two hearts as one; you know, that sort of thing. It’s going to be both heaven and hell. It’s a wonderful ending to the story, don’t
Dizzy from the effort of reading the note, Molly put it down and reached for the mobile, but something was weighing her body down and she couldn’t move over. She pulled harder, the aftereffects of the drugs dulling her senses, but she still felt that weight. It was then that she realized there was something odd about it. It was warm.

Confused, she turned her head to look more closely at Sherlock. She tried to move again, watching him as she did, and suddenly everything clicked hideously into place. She tore the blanket away with pale, shaking hands.

She saw what had been done to them and began to scream.
Greg Lestrade had just sat down at his desk when his mobile rang.

Unknown number.

Uneasily, he answered. “Hello?”

“Molly?” He gasped, hearing the familiar voice, weak and groggy but so welcome to his ears.

Donovan and Anderson, who had been walking down the hall, stopped dead in their tracks.

“Where are you?” Lestrade said. “Are you all right? Is Sherlock with you?”

He paled. Donovan and Anderson rushed into his office, eyes wide. Lestrade’s hands began to shake as he listened.

“Oh, my God. All right, Molly. We’re going to get a fix on this phone, OK? Just stay on here with me. We’ll get to you and Sherlock as fast as we can.”

He jerked his head, but Donovan was already making the call. Anderson, meanwhile, was on his own mobile. “John? It’s Anderson. Molly’s on the phone with Lestrade. They’re alive. We’re triangulating their location now.”

Conversations continued, new ones were made, and Mycroft Holmes came striding in 10 minutes later. Lestrade still had Molly on the phone.

“Molly, is Sherlock awake yet? OK, listen to me. We know where you are within a half-mile radius. Mycroft is here, John’s on his way, and we’re coming to get you. How much battery does the mobile have left? OK. We’re about two hours from where you are by car—”

“We are not traveling by car,” Mycroft said. “I have two helicopters on standby. The local police have been informed and will arrive to them shortly.”

Lestrade continued to hold the phone as though it was a lifeline. “She’s going to try and wake Sherlock,” he said. “Apparently he got a stronger dose of whatever it was.”

John burst into the office, pale, shaking and out of breath. Lestrade knew how he felt.

“They’re alive? Are they OK? What happened to them?” John gasped.

“Alive, yes. OK… they will be, I reckon. It was Moriarty. The bastard took them just like we thought.”

“Nowhere to be found, unfortunately,” Mycroft said. He seemed considerably calmer than everyone else. “As to their being all right... a medical team will be accompanying us. And a surgery team is standing by.”


It was then that Lestrade noticed that Mycroft’s hand was holding his umbrella handle in a death grip. The elder Holmes sighed quietly, but there was a fire in his eyes John had rarely seen.

“Apparently,” Mycroft said softly, “They’ve become...attached.”

Sherlock heard a voice as though someone was calling to him from a long tunnel. As consciousness slowly dragged him to the surface, his eyes fluttered open. He was groggy, thirsty, and very cold, despite being covered with a blanket of some sort and a warm body pressed against his left side.

He moaned softly. The voice spoke again, and through blurry vision he saw Molly next to him, shaking him. “Sherlock, wake up.”

“I am awake,” he rasped. “Though I almost wish I wasn’t.” He started to sit up but found that his lower body was being held down by something. As his vision and mind cleared, he stared at Molly’s pale, tear-stained face, noticing how oddly they were positioned; the fact that Molly was not sitting up or trying to help him sit up. He felt himself go as pale as she was.

Sherlock closed his eyes. “Lestrade?”

“Everyone,” Molly said. “The local police are searching. Greg and John and Mycroft are on their way in helicopters.”

“He does like his dramatic entrances,” Sherlock murmured. He opened his eyes again and looked into Molly’s. “You’ve looked.”

She nodded. “It can be...we can be separated. It’s just surgical thread.”

He brought a hand down and slowly traced it along their hips; experimentally, she thought. His fingers were cold and slightly shaky.

“He left a note,” Molly said, reaching over and handing it to him.

Sherlock resisted the urge to ask why she hadn’t told him right away. It wasn’t as though they were going to jump up and try to find him. Moriarty was long gone by now, at any rate.

He read the note, frowning. Something wasn’t right. Well, nothing about this was right. But there
was something more to it…

He jerked his head, catching the faint sound of crunching dead leaves two seconds before they heard the voice. “Sherlock Holmes? Molly Hooper?”

“Here!” They shouted in unison.

They continued shouting until the welcome sight of the police came into view. Molly grasped Sherlock’s hand, unaware that she’d done it until she felt his fingers briefly clasp hers.

Everything was a blur afterwards: the examination, the questions, the pitying, horrified looks from the police when they thought Sherlock and Molly didn’t see them. Then John, Greg and Mycroft arrived, and there was more of the same. Sherlock and Molly were carefully place into a stretcher large enough to accommodate their condition and off they went in helicopters like something out of a film.

It wasn’t until they were about to be taken into surgery that Sherlock figured out what the other part of Moriarty’s note meant.

He grabbed John by the collar. “John. Whatever you do, do not let them separate Molly and I after the surgery.”

“What?” John asked, confused.

Molly frowned, looking at Sherlock. Then she paled, remembering exactly what the note said. “He…”

“I’m almost certain of it, yes.”

“Oh, God,” Molly gasped. “What did he do to do it?”


"Sherlock," Mycroft said softly, stepping over to where they lay on a large gurney. "I realize you may have become more...fond of Molly as a result of your captivity; however-

"BECAUSE HE IMPLANTED SOMETHING INSIDE US!" Sherlock roared.

John staggered back a step. Mycroft’s eyes widened.

“Tell them to be careful,” Sherlock said tersely. “After they cut the thread, they’ll need to do X-rays and go from there.”

“Are you certain of this, Sherlock?” Mycroft asked.

“The note said ‘side by side,’ which is…this,” Molly broke in. “But the ‘two hearts as one’ means something else. He meant for us to be separated physically. There’s nothing connecting us. It has to be implants.”

“Well done, Molly,” Sherlock said, impressed.

“Learned a few things over the years I’ve known you,” she replied.

Mycroft nodded. “I shall go now and inform them.”
John remained with them until their anesthesia had been administered. “I’ll be waiting,” he promised. “Mrs. Hudson and some of your friends, Molly, will be here later after... it’s all finished. You’re going to be fine.”

Molly bit her lip. They were home, just as Moriarty had promised. But she wasn’t sure if things were ever going to really be fine again.
They were in their hospital room, side by side but in separate beds, when John, Lestrade and Mycroft came in. They all wore the same expression; the look of a man who is carrying a great weight that he’s about to put on someone else’s shoulders.

Sherlock and Molly studied them for a few seconds. They shuffled their feet; even Mycroft looked as though he very much did not want to speak. Sherlock sighed.

“Will one of you please get on with it?”

John’s eyes flicked up to stare at him. “The surgery was a success, to separate you-”

“Obviously, as we’re now separated. What about the rest?” Sherlock asked.

John glanced down.

Lestrade took over. “But you were right. About the implants.”

“Obviously we were,” Sherlock said, and all three men blinked in surprise at his use of the word we. Sherlock made a sound of exasperation low in his throat.

“Molly deduced what had happened as well; although it took her longer, of course. It would be insulting not to acknowledge such a display of intellect. Now. What about the implants?”

Mycroft scrubbed a hand over his face. “The devices are similar to pacemakers in some respects. They’re placed near your hearts. They are smaller, however; nearly half the size. There are two wires, leading into the left and right ventricle chambers of your hearts, delivering electrical pulses that speed them up by two beats per minute.”

Molly frowned. “That’s not very much. They aren’t there to regulate our heartbeats, so what are they for?”

The three men glanced at each other and down again. Just before Sherlock was about to launch a tirade, John spoke.

“The devices are likely connected; probably on the same frequency. We think they’ve been programmed to stop working if the two of you are too far apart. And if that happens, they’ll explode.”

“And so will our hearts,” Molly said softly.

“How far is too far?” Sherlock asked.

Mycroft looked at him steadily. “By our best estimate: 13.71 meters.”

Molly gasped. Sherlock pressed his lips together.
“That’s a very precise estimate.”

“We’re basing it on the standard signal distance, Sherlock,” Mycroft said. “Would you like to press your and Molly’s luck and go further?”

“No,” Molly snapped. “And I’m sure they can’t be removed safely, can they.”

“No,” John answered. “There’s no way to be sure whether or not they’ve been fortified against tampering. And even if we knew the frequency and had the RIDs, there’s no way of knowing what would happen if they were deactivated, either.”

“Oh, I think there’s a very good way to be sure,” Molly said. “Consider their source.”

“Molly, this isn’t going to help,” Sherlock said bluntly.

It was the wrong thing to say. Molly rounded on him. “Then what is going to help, Sherlock? Do you have a time machine to go back to before you became such a little shit of a showoff and caught Moriarty’s attention? Or maybe you have the way to safely remove these things somewhere in that massive brain of yours and you can write it down for a surgeon? Because those are the only two things I can see helping right now! So kindly piss off telling me how to react, because I’ve just found out I may be spending the rest of my life within 13.71 meters of you and I’m a little upset at the moment!”

The four men blinked.

John cleared his throat. “You know, I need to phone Mary, so I’m just going to-”

“And I’ve got some reports to fill out,” Lestrade added quickly.

“And I have some matters to attend to,” Mycroft said hastily. “Brother, Molly; I’ll see you later this evening. You’ll be discharged tomorrow.”

The three men all but ran from the room, leaving Sherlock alone with Molly. He studied her carefully, trying to determine the exact cause of her anger. He opened his mouth, closed it, and opened it again. “I’m sorry,” he said quietly, and she sighed.

“So am I. This is just…we’re back, we’re really finally away from him, and now to find out this…we’re free but we’re still, I dunno; captives, I guess. I can’t get away from you.”

“I’m sorry that my presence is such a hardship for you to endure, Molly,” he said, stung by her words in spite of himself.

“That’s not what I meant, Sherlock!” Molly cried. “This is just: God, how could he think this was a perfect solution?”

Sherlock narrowed his eyes, concentrating. “The Eight of Wands denotes positive goals, successful relationships and a journey. That’s been accomplished now. The final card, the Chariot: journey, vengeance, perseverance. That has happened as well, now that we know what he’s done. The Three of Cups: good luck in love and a happy ending. That hasn’t happened yet. Moriarty was finishing his vengeance by implanting these devices, while he set the stage for love and a happy ending, believing that something would happen if we have to remain in each other’s proximity.”

Molly stared. “Something like what?”

“Something like us falling in love, of course,” Sherlock said.
Molly frowned. “Doesn’t he know-how you are?”

“Of course he does,” Sherlock said, exasperated. “However, he’s obviously under the impression that changing circumstances can change people.”

Molly was silent for a moment. Then she looked into his eyes. “And do you think that can happen?”

Now Sherlock was silent. After the past seven months, he was no longer certain about a lot of things. But this wasn’t the right time for that sort of discussion.

“I’m no fortune teller,” he said finally.

Molly blinked. That was more than she’d expected from him. He continued.

“However, we have pressing matters to discuss right now.”

She nodded. There was a lot they were going to have to talk about. “All right,” she said.

“The sensible solution is for you to move into Baker Street,” he said. “John’s old room is within the implant parameters since the signal can travel through the floor and walls. There is significantly more room there than your flat possesses. I rarely use the kitchen and am willing to compromise on the décor of the sitting room. You’ll have your own bath as well.”

He paused and looked at her. Molly considered. Of course they had to live together, until a way out of this could be found. She didn’t have any great attachment to her flat, and Baker Street was much closer to Bart’s. She’d have her own room and loo. Toby had been given to a family in London, she’d been told earlier, and she was loathe to pull him from a happy home with loving children.

“All right,” she said after she thought it through. “I agree.”

Sherlock nodded, as though he’d not expected anything else. “I realize it will be difficult for you not to work at Bart’s anymore; however—”

“Whoa, wait a minute,” Molly said sharply. “Who said I wouldn’t be working at Bart’s anymore?”

He blinked. “Well it won’t be possible to have a set schedule since I never know when a case might come up—”

“Hold it,” Molly said. “The whole point of you doing-what you did-was for the sake of my work and my music. And now you’re trying to tell me I can’t keep my job? That doesn’t work for me, Sherlock!”

“So what, I’m supposed to give up my work? And do what? Spend all day with you in the morgue?” Sherlock demanded. “You know how important my work is to me!”

“And you know how important mine is to me!” Molly snapped. “Look, I’m willing to go part time, but I’m not giving it up! And I didn’t ask you to give yours up, either!”

She took a deep breath and lowered her voice. “We’ll have to come to an arrangement of some kind. At this point I’m not even suited to go on cases with you and John. And you know it.”

Sherlock sighed. “I’ll have to teach you how to use a gun; continue your self-defense. And keep improving your deduction abilities. You’ve a sharp mind and your pathology and post-mortem skills will be an asset.”

“I’m going to need to adjust before we go running off to solve murders,” Molly said. She held up a
hand as he opened his mouth. “Sherlock, we’ve had a life-altering experience. Maybe you can just go back to business as usual tomorrow, but I’m not ready. We need to get settled into Baker Street, figure out a compromise for my work and your work, and get me a little better prepared. I need this. So unless you’re going to forcibly drag me along with you, I need some time.”

He studied her. “How much time?” he asked, trying not to sound sulky.

“I dunno. Two weeks, maybe?” At his expression she narrowed her eyes. “This isn’t easy for me either, you know. And we really don’t need to be fighting right now. It won’t solve anything.”

He glowered, but she was right. There would be tedious things, like rearranging furniture, getting him clearance to work at Bart’s with Molly (that would likely need a bit of help from Mycroft; he knew almost everything a lab technician knew, but had no formal training or education to back it up) and helping her learn how not to get them both killed.

“Fine,” he said. “But I reserve the right to whine and needle you if anything that’s an 8 or higher comes in from Lestrade.”

“I’ll take that under consideration,” Molly said wryly. “Now what else do we need to discuss?”

They talked for hours, tentatively shaping their new future together before Molly fell asleep. Sherlock paced their room and then read. Occasionally he stopped and just looked at her, thinking about how their lives had been torn asunder by Moriarty and how they were going to take the pieces and build them skywards.
Two weeks later…

“Again,” Sherlock directed.

Molly sighed. “Sherlock, we’ve been at this for three hours. My arms hurt.”

“Is that what you’re going to tell a murderer? Or a gang of thieves? Well, of course, they’ll just stop and leave you alone then,” Sherlock said scathingly.

“I’m been practicing for two bloody weeks!” Molly exclaimed. “We’ve been here every day!”

“And we’ll continue to be here every day until your aim is perfect every time,” Sherlock snapped. “Now Do.It.Again.”

Molly glared at him. He glared back.

Then she saw something in his eyes; something beyond the usual brusqueness. He was afraid. Afraid of her getting hurt or killed. Not just because they had no idea of what the death of one of them would mean for the other, but because he was afraid of losing her.

Molly took a deep breath, clenched her jaw, and aimed again.

Three weeks later…

“Sherlock, hand me that slide, please,” Molly said.

He sighed, but he promptly rose and did what she asked. From the corner of her eye, she saw him tugging at the left sleeve of his lab coat.

“Thank you,” she said, returning her gaze to her microscope. “And you have to wear the coat so stop tugging at it.”

“It doesn’t fit right,” he whined.

“It fits perfectly fine. You just hate it.”

“Of course I hate it. It’s a lab coat.”
“It’s official dress.”

“Officially useless, yes,” Sherlock said.

Molly sighed. “Stop, please, and get back to work. I know you’re stalling.”

“I am not.”

“Sherlock.”

He made a disgruntled sound deep in his throat. “I’ve been teaching you entirely too well.”

Molly hid her smile behind a toxicology report.

One month later…

Sherlock cleared his throat and cast his eyes down. “Sorry.”

“S’okay. Nothing you haven’t seen before,” Molly said, trying to sound casual as she held the towel around her.

“Still, I should’ve knocked. I’m sorry.”

“Sherlock?” she asked as he started to turn away.

He turned back to face her.

“Do you ever think about it?” Molly asked quietly. “That day. That he made us… do that.”

Sherlock looked down. He wanted to lie; desperately wanted to lie. But this was Molly, and he could no more lie to her than he could John.

He cleared his throat again. “Yes.”

Molly felt her heart beat just a little faster.

He met her eyes. “Do you?” Sherlock asked, equally quietly.

She nodded, willing herself not to look away. “Yes.”

Something shifted in the air between them; something Molly couldn’t see but definitely felt. As horrible as that day was, Sherlock had done everything he could to make it as best it could be for them. Molly would always love him for that.

And if she was completely honest, something inside her desperately wished that it had been different. That it had happened not because of Moriarty’s threats, but because they both wanted it. She didn’t want to remember how his hair felt twined in her fingers, or the faint ripples of muscles across his back and he gently moved inside her. But she knew these were things she could never forget.

Sherlock’s eyes flicked over her. She didn’t try to hide it from him; there was no point. He knew everything about her. And though she couldn’t say the same, she knew him better than anyone except John. And she knew he was remembering too.

She didn’t want to wait for him to turn away from her; didn’t want to see him shutting down, shutting her out. Molly turned away and went back into the bathroom. As she turned to close the door, Sherlock was still standing there, his eyes burning into her.
*Two months later…*

Sherlock raced around the corner, forcing air into lungs burning from the cold as he made to cross to the next building. John was close at his heels, and Molly was…

“Sherlock!”

John’s voice, angry and frightened, hissed in his ear just as he was jolted soundly by the pendant attached to the sturdy silver chain around his neck. He halted immediately, lips briefly pressing together from the electric charge and irritation. A moment later Molly came around the corner, gasping.

“Taking the scenic route?” Sherlock asked in a low voice.

“It would help if you indicated a direction before you took off,” Molly retorted in a hiss.

“John knew what I was doing.”

“I’m not John. I’m still learning.”

“Obviously.”

Molly crossed her arms. “Stop being an arse. You’re not perfect.”

“Can we save this discussion for a time when we are *not* chasing criminals?” John asked.

“Fine,” Sherlock said.

“Fine,” Molly echoed.

John sighed.

*Three months later…*

“Here,” Molly said, pointing at the body of Ms. Rivers.

John squinted. “I don’t understand.”

Sherlock all but beamed at Molly. “Oh, good show, Molly Hooper.”

“What?” John asked.

“The needle mark in her arm,” Molly said. “It’s too large to have been made by her insulin shots.”

“There’s a needle mark?” John asked.

“In her freckle,” Sherlock said, whipping out his mobile. “Time to call Lestrade.”

John looked at Molly. “I reckon you’re getting the hang of this,” he said admiringly.

Molly smiled. “I guess I am.”

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Molly didn’t see the man until she felt her body connect with his as she turned. “I’m so sorry,” she began, then stopped when he fully turned and she saw who it was.
Tom.

Both of them dropped their eyes, saying “sorry” in awkward voices at the same time. Molly glanced up at him to see he was glancing up at her. Hastily she forced a smile to her lips. “How’ve you been?”

“Good!” Tom said quickly. A little too quickly and a little too cheerfully. He’s shaken up too. Doesn’t want me to know it, though. Married now. Has a child, there are some spit-up stains on his shirt. Why did his wife let him go out like that?

Molly realized she sounded too much like Sherlock and shook her head. “That’s great. Married now, I see, that’s lovely,” she said cheerfully. A little too cheerfully.

“Yeah, yeah, got married um… well, not long after we split up, actually,” Tom admitted. His voice was a mixture of sheepishness and pride.

Molly swallowed hard. She hadn’t realized she’d be so unprepared for this. “That’s great, Tom,” she said gently. I’m happy for you. Honestly. You deserve it.”

Tom opened his mouth to reply, but whatever he was going to say was drowned out by the voice of Sherlock.

“Molly, I asked for extra vinegar for you but it still may not be enough…oh.” Sherlock stopped beside Molly, holding two orders of fish and chips. His eyes narrowed at Tom, swept over him, seemed both satisfied and angry by what he saw.

“Mister Holmes,” Tom said, calmly and amiably enough, considering his eyes showed he wanted to punch Sherlock.

“Mister Rhodes,” Sherlock said coolly. “How very nice to see you. Matrimony seems to suit you well; how are your wife and daughter? She might be a bit too young for solid food yet; best let her stick to formula. Of course, breast feeding is best; pity your wife didn’t want to breast feed. Why was that?” Sherlock asked sweetly.

“Sherlock!” Molly exclaimed. “Sorry, Tom,” she said, hastily dragging Sherlock, fish and chips and all, away. “It was nice seeing you!” she called over her shoulder as she continued to drag Sherlock along, muttering under her breath that he’d best keep going or else.

She didn’t speak when they got in the taxi. She didn’t even look at him. Sherlock studied her. “What’s wrong?”

“Nothing,” Molly said.

“Something is wrong. Tell me what it is.”

“I said nothing.”

“Don’t lie to me, Molly.”

“I don’t have anything to say.”

“It’s Tom, isn’t it? It bothers you that he’s married.”

“I’m happy for him,” Molly said.

“That isn’t what I said,” Sherlock told her.
They arrived back at 221 Baker. Sherlock paid the driver and they went inside. As soon as they were in 221 B, Sherlock put their food on the kitchen table and stepped in front of Molly.

“It bothers you, doesn’t it?” he repeated. “That he got married so soon. Why? You know he wasn’t suited for you, that he was—”

“What? A pale imitation of you?” Molly demanded. “That I would have just broken his heart? I know all that, Sherlock! You don’t have a clue why I’m upset, do you? Not one.”

“I’m asking you to tell me,” Sherlock said.

“You’re the brilliant consulting detective, you tell me,” Molly snapped.

“Molly—”

“I want to be alone,” she interrupted, and ran out to go to her room.

She almost made it out of earshot, but not quite. He heard her struggle to stifle her sobs. He sighed and sat at the kitchen table, staring at their dinner. He shoved it into the fridge after a few minutes and went into the sitting room, throwing himself into his chair and retreating into his mind.

When he realized the reason behind Molly’s upset, he leaned back, staring at the wall without really seeing it.

It wasn’t Tom she missed. It was what he’d represented. Love, happiness. A future.

In Molly’s eyes, she was now forever tied to a man who did not, and would not, ever love her. She’d be single yet attached for the rest of her life. Never be kissed again, have her hand held; yet be within 13.71 meters of the man she’d been in love with for years.

He sighed. Not good.

The question was: what was he going to do about it?

Four months later...

Years ago, Sherlock Holmes had only had a bit more understanding of other people’s feelings than a piece of toast.

That had all changed in the time after John, the Fall, the time after it, and the seven months he and Molly had been Moriarty’s captives.

He didn’t use the term hostages, because they hadn’t been bartered for anything. Prisoners wasn’t fitting exactly, because it wasn’t related to the military. And captives was an inadequate, pale description for what they had endured.

And now he was an expert on all things Molly Hooper. And he could see things he didn’t like.

She went on their detecting escapades with little complaint. She seemed to enjoy it most of the time, even. And they worked well together in the lab, and he’d managed to stop most of his verbal tirades and caustic comments about her. She was one of the few people that Sherlock made an effort not to treat like rubbish. In fact, he was even more careful to try not to upset her than he was with John.

But despite his gentleness with her, the effort he’d taken to make her feel accepted, it wasn’t proving to be enough. Ever since they’d run into Tom, it was there like pages to turn in a book. She didn’t sleep enough, eat enough. She looked tired, sad. He knew what it meant.
Molly was dying inside.

He couldn’t let that happen. Because if she went over the edge, died inside, she’d eventually die outside as well.

He had to stop it. He knew one thing, one very big thing, which might be able to bring her back.

He’d been thinking about it, to one degree or another, since their return. But over the past month, he’d found himself spending considerable time walking through his Mind Palace, searching for all the pieces he needed to put this puzzle together.

He had his answer now. He only hoped he could explain it in the correct way to her. It was a logical decision, but it was also an emotional one.

He had changed his mind. Now he had to know if that would change her life.
There was a time when all Molly Hooper thought she wanted was to marry Sherlock Holmes. She realized on the day he proposed that nothing was ever the way you imagined it would be.

He didn’t so much walk into the kitchen that morning as he blew in like a storm, about to burst with a torrential downpour that would leave her emotionally drowning.

“Molly, I love you and I think we should get married,” he said to her.

She dropped her jam spoon with a clatter that reverberated through her like a shot.

“What?”

He sighed. “Must I really repeat it? You heard me perfectly well judging by your reaction.”


He shrugged. “It’s what people do, don’t they? People who are going to spend the rest of their lives together?”

“People in love, yes. And anyway, we aren’t people.”

“I believe you’ll find that we do both fit the classification of Homo sapien, Molly. And I did just say that I love you.”

“You know what I mean.” She covered her face with her hands for a moment. “How… how do you love me? And why do you want to marry me?”

“Really, Molly, you need to stop repeating me. And why wouldn’t I? Wouldn’t you like that? To be married to me?”

“That… that is not enough of a reason,” Molly said.

His brows slanted together in confusion. “Don’t you love me?”

“Sherlock—”

“Do you, or do you not, love me, Molly Hooper?” he asked, sounding confused and a bit irritated. He certainly knew how to sweep a girl off her feet, Molly thought, a small hysterical laugh bubbling up in her head.

“I’m waiting,” Sherlock said patiently (as patient as he could be, anyway).

“You know I do,” Molly said with a sigh.
“Then why are you not ecstatic? Why aren’t you jumping up to embrace me with squeals and tears of happiness and saying ‘yes, of course I’ll marry you?’ I’m rarely at a loss, but I must say you’ve confounded me,” Sherlock said.

“Because this is a little too fast, not to mention strange! Tell me what your other reasons are, because I know you have some,” Molly said, standing up and moving to stand in front of him.

He shrugged again. “It will quash a lot of irritating gossip. It will offer you protection in the event that something serious happens to me. It will help avoid a lot of potentially unpleasant mess in the future at the Yard.”

“Sherlock…”

“Just think: we’ll never be forced to testify against each other,” he said brightly.

“Sherlock…”

“And because I love you and want you to be happy,” he finished, meeting her eyes for the first time since he’d started rattling off all the logical reasons why she should become Mrs. Sherlock Holmes.

“It just seems wrong,” she said quietly.

“Why? Because I’m not on one knee spouting off romantic nonsense about how you complete me?” he asked. “You know exactly what you mean to me, Molly. I wouldn’t be offering this otherwise. You were right: we aren’t those people. But that doesn’t mean I don’t want you.”

“How… how could I be happy knowing that you’d be miserable?” she asked sadly.

He raised his eyebrows. “Why do you think I’d be miserable? Haven’t we been living together for four months in relative harmony and a near lack of boredom?”

“But you don’t love me,” she said quietly.

He frowned. “Is that what this is about? You don’t feel loved? You don’t think I love you? How ridiculous is that? I just told you, three times in fact, that I do! Why can’t you accept that?”

She stared at him. “Did you tell Janine that you loved her?” she asked.

“What on earth does Janine have to do with this?”

“Did you tell her that, too?” Molly repeated. “Because that was just a ruse to get what you wanted.”

“What possible reason would I have to ask you to marry me as a ruse?” Sherlock snapped. “That’s ridiculous!”

“It’s not at all ridiculous!” Molly retorted. “You use people, Sherlock! I know you care about them, but love me? I don’t think you have any idea what being in love is like! And you definitely have no idea at all what it’s like being in love with someone who doesn’t love you!”

Sherlock sighed and closed his eyes. When he opened them he raised his eyebrows at her. “Molly… I do love you. As much as I am capable of loving anyone, I love you. And you know that. Now please stop being absurd and say yes.”

She shook her head and sighed.

“What must I do to convince you that I am sincere?” Sherlock asked. “Buy you a ring?”
“You bought Janine a ring,” Molly said quietly.

“Oh, for God’s sake, Molly! If I’d wanted Janine, I would have tried to get her to forgive me!” Sherlock exclaimed. “If you recall, it was you I came to see when I got out of hospital. Not her.”

She looked him over. Nothing suggested he was lying. But the idea that he was sincere was more terrifying to her than the lie would be.

“No, we didn’t get together in the usual way,” he said softly. “Instead of candlelit dinners, we got shock treatments. We didn’t go to films; we cleaned vomit off each other when Moriarty made us ill. But that’s more real than any storybook could ever be, don’t you see that? We went through a fairytale darkly, but we found our way out of the woods. We got to come home. We can still have a happy ending.”

Molly stared at him. She’d rarely heard him wax poetic, and never like this. Which meant that he was telling her the truth and…

Oh, god. Marry him.

“Well, but what about…” Molly began, unsure how to voice her thoughts.

“What about what?”

She gave him a look.

“Oh.”

She raised her eyebrows.

His eyes got that remote look they did when he was thinking.

It was part of marriage: love. He knew that. It would be a distraction. Not to say there couldn’t be anything beneficial about it, however. And not to say it hadn’t crossed his mind. He was human; he had urges. It had simply seemed better to put all that away when they returned, despite knowing that he felt…something for Molly.

He’d suspected that it was part of the problem, based on her behavior. Obviously carrying on as they had been was contributing to her condition. He should do some research though. It would be important to her. Their forced encounter was not a good reference. It had been about friendship and endurance, not love or desire. And sentimental though it was, he wanted to give her as real a wedding night as possible.

“Is it wrong to ask that we wait until the wedding?”

Molly stared.

He looked up at her again. “I know it seems a bit absurd, considering everything else. But we should do it properly, shouldn’t we?”

“Sherlock…”

“I don’t intend to be half a husband to you, Molly,” he said, softly but firmly. “And that alone, if nothing else, should remove any ridiculous doubts that might still be lurking in your mind.”

Molly sighed. She knew he was right, he almost always was.
“OK, then” she said.

“OK, then, what?” he asked.

“Yes, Sherlock. I will marry you.”

He beamed at her.

She wanted to laugh. It had to be one of the most bizarre marriage proposals ever. But it was Sherlock. It was her and Sherlock and seven months of being in a room with one window and zero anything else save Moriarty and all he’d done to them.

He pulled a ring box out of his pocket, eyes never leaving hers as he opened it. Molly looked at the ring he’d bought for her. A one-carat diamond, oval cut, silver band. It was simple and beautiful and exactly what she would’ve chosen if she’d picked it out. Of course he knew that.

He slipped it on her finger then surprised her by kissing her hand, his lips lingering on her soft skin.

She responded with elevated pulse and dilated pupils.

So. He’d been right. All the things Moriarty had done had not destroyed her ability to desire him. She’d also been missing physical and sexual contact. As abstracts, but all the same. He’d make it a point to give her contact often. He knew the studies about touch and thriving in infants. Adults needed touch too. Even him. He hadn’t realized how much before this happened; before he’d realized he loved her. He released her hand after a long moment and they stood looking at each other.

It was Sherlock who broke the silence.

“Well?” he asked her. At her puzzled expression he sighed, pulled her close and gave her a warm, lingering kiss. When it was over he cupped her face and smiled. “Don’t just stand there, Molly. We have people to tell and a wedding to plan!”
Molly stood looking out the window, still wearing her wedding gown, arms crossed over her chest. Her wedding band shone with a soft gleam in the light from a street lamp. She didn’t startle from him turning the knob or walking into the room. She’d known he was at the door before he’d even moved to open it. The time spent locked up with him had sharpened her senses; especially her awareness of him.

Sherlock moved up behind her and gently pulled her to him, her back pressed against his chest. His arms came up to wrap over hers. He said nothing for a long time, just stood with her looking out into the night. Finally he spoke.

“Molly I realize that this is not an area of expertise for me, but I am given to understand that two people who just got married are supposed to be ecstatic and practically ripping each other’s clothes off not long after the reception,” Sherlock said wryly.

Molly couldn’t help but smile as she turned to face him. “Yeah. They are.”

“So why are you not practically ripping my clothes off?”

She sighed. “Because I don’t want to…” her voice trailed off.

“To what? Take advantage of me?” Sherlock asked. “Molly, you know me well enough to know that I do not do anything that I don’t want to. You have neither coerced nor trapped me into marriage; as I recall, it was I who had to convince you to get married. And if I suggested it, and willingly agreed to it, and I did, that means I understood what being married entails,” Sherlock said, eyes intense upon hers. “And I have told you before that I want you, that I love you. That has not changed because we participated in a ceremony that put a stamp of legality on us. Really, are you going to spend our entire live together filled with ridiculous doubts that I must dispel on a daily basis? How will we get any cases solved or work done in the lab if I’m spending all our time reassuring you?”
Molly smiled. “Have I told you what a romantic you are?”

He smiled back, stroking her hair away from her cheek.

“It’s time to put the past behind us,” he told her.

“But we can’t put the past behind us,” she said softly. “Not really. Not with… all this.”

Sherlock turned her to face him. “Well. Let’s make the most of the future then, yes?”

His expression was so open, so sincere, she couldn’t help but smile. He smiled in return, then leaned down and gently pressed his lips to hers. She sighed as she returned the kiss, her fingers moving up to tangle in his hair. He was right. They were going to be together for the rest of their lives. Molly didn’t want to waste any more time being paralyzed by the past. It could never be forgotten, but they could keep going.

Her fingers ran down his chest, touching his nipples through his shirt. He shivered in response, his eyes locking with hers. He made no attempt to conceal his desire for her, which touched her in a way she couldn’t explain. It made her want him desperately. And now he was hers. And she was his, as she’d always been even when she didn’t realize.

She tugged at the jacket of his wedding suit, and he raised his arms up so that she could pull it off him. His shirt soon followed, her fingers shaking slightly as they unfastened the buttons. He’d removed his shoes earlier so there was nothing to deter his trousers and pants as she slid them down and off, along with his socks. She knew it was supposed to be slow, seductive, but the need to have his warm naked flesh pressed tight against hers was overriding that. Besides; this was Sherlock. He had no need for someone else’s ideas on how a wedding night was supposed to be, and he’d be quick to tell her that.

His hands gripped her hips as she knelt before him and kissed and licked a path up one thigh, lightly biting the muscles one by one at his hip and stomach until he moaned and hauled her to her feet. He deftly turned her and began to make short work of her zipper and buttons, until her wedding dress fell in a satin and crinoline heap around her legs. She stepped out of the dress, clad only in white lace knickers with a matching garter belt and thigh-high stockings.

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His lips quirked in a combination of amusement and appreciation. He drew her close, until their upper bodies were pressed tightly together, sliding a hand down to cup a breast as he kissed her until she was panting. He pulled back and slid his hands from her shoulders to her stomach, stopping along the way to brush his thumbs over her breasts as Molly cried out and arched up. Sherlock moved back up and his mouth sought hers again, and she met his kiss with the urgency of a person dying of thirst who’d discovered an oasis. He was hard against her thigh, and she burned with the thought of him being inside of her.

He moved back down to her breasts, languidly licking her nipples. They peaked and hardened instantly under his tongue. Her hands tangled in his hair as she whispered his name. His ran his fingers down her stomach, circling her navel, trailing across to her right hip. He squeezed the soft skin there gently, then moved to repeat his action to her inner thigh. Molly moaned in desire and frustration. Then, with agonizing slowness, he moved down and removed her knickers, then brushed his mouth against the soft curls between her legs.

As soon as his mouth made contact she felt as though she’d been struck by lightning. She cried out again, flushed and gasping, as Sherlock moved closer to her soft secret folds. She felt a warm rush of fluid pool between her legs and her clit felt as though it was on fire. "Please, Sherlock," she begged.
He smiled fleetingly, kissing her inner thigh, then his mouth began a gentle probing of her sex. Finding the secret he was seeking, he stroked his tongue gently against her, watching her face as he did. "You’re on fire, Molly," he whispered. “Aren’t you.”

"Yes," she gasped, pressing her hips against his mouth. "Sherlock, oh, god, it feels so good..." her voice gave way to more gasps and her fingers tangled in his hair, tugging and twisting locks of it between her fingers.

He continued to caress her with his tongue and lips, feeling her arousal building through the thrust of her hips and the hitching sounds of her breath. When he realized she was getting close to a climax he stopped, kissing her navel as she moaned in frustration. He unclasped her garters and popped the snap on the belt, tossing it aside as he rolled her stockings down and slipped them off her feet.

He lifted her up and carefully eased her onto what was now their bed, leaving a trail of tiny kisses along her neck as he braced himself over her on his arms. He brushed her hair away from her face again and she turned to press an open-mouthed kiss into his palm, then gently scraped it with her teeth, causing him to gasp.

Sherlock’s eyes met hers and she smiled, sliding her hands to his shoulders before cupping his face. This night was more than just their wedding night. It was their first time since that day Moriarty had given Molly that choice that wasn’t a choice, and they’d had sex to appease his command that Molly ‘play with her gift.’ They were about to make a new memory of sexual intimacy, the first of many if Molly had anything to do with it, that wasn’t based on compulsion and force but on love.

Searching each other’s eyes and finding what they both needed to see, Molly reached down and took him in hand, then guided him into her.

She was so wet and hot it astounded him. His cock fit into her easily as he pushed inside her, filling her as though he’d been made for her. She held him close as he rocked with her, her arms wrapped around his upper back, tracing absent patterns on his skin as she gasped and lifted her hips to meet his thrusts.

He buried his face in her hair, inhaling the fragrance of shampoo and that scent that was purely Molly. His own body was aching desperately for release, but he was determined to wait until he had given her what she needed.

His lips ghosted over her cheek and moved to her neck. It was a cliché straight out of a romance novel to say they fit together perfectly, but it was true. He’d never put any stock into the idea but now, with her hands and lips and legs all around him, he understood.

Molly threw her head back, fingers clenching his skin hard, and Sherlock knew she’d found her release. She cried out his name again and again as she came, muscles gripping and releasing him as she peaked and rode the waves of pleasure. Her orgasm brought on his own climax, and he moaned her name into her neck as his body shook and he simultaneously lost and found himself within her.

As they lay entwined afterwards, Molly nuzzled his cheek with her nose. “So now we live happily ever after?” she asked teasingly.

“Apart from the inevitable domestics,” Sherlock replied. “I understand that make-up sex is a pleasant side effect of those, however.”

“When did you become such an optimist?” Molly asked with a laugh.

He shrugged. “Negativity does little to improve a situation, does it?”
“You’re pretty savvy about feelings when you want to be,” she said.

“I’ve had some rather good teachers,” Sherlock said, kissing the top of her head.

A few minutes of comfortable silence passed.

“You know we got a rather nice new microscope from Mycroft as our wedding gift,” Sherlock said in what he hoped was a casual tone.

Molly rose up to look at him. “You want to go look at those slides, don’t you? On our wedding night.”

He had the grace to look sheepish. “Not good?”

She sighed. “And I was just bragging on your emotional enlightenment. Take a bath with me later to make it up to me?” Molly asked.

“If we can go collect a comparison sample at the cemetery first,” Sherlock said.

“Take me to dinner first and it’s a deal,” Molly grinned.

He kissed the tip of her nose. “Deal, Molly Hooper Holmes.”

Molly snogged him soundly. “Dinner, cemetery, slides, and a bath. Who said romance is dead?” she murmured, and Sherlock smiled against her lips.

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