An Ecstasy of Fumbling

by Irollforinitiative

Summary

Sherlock wakes up and Mycroft walks away

Notes

See the end of the work for notes

He was preparing ways to breech the physical wall between himself and Mycroft as they sat by Sherlock's bedside when the machine monitoring Sherlock's brain function spiked into the conscious zone.

The week that followed was like a comedy of errors. The moment the monitor spiked alarms went off, the room was flooded with doctors and nurses that shoved everyone else out. Greg went about calling everyone he knew to tell them. Of course what to tell them was the issue. He had called John first and explained what had happened.

"John! Monitor. Beeping." He was out of breath with anxiety and excitement.
"Greg, breathe. Okay, what's going on?" John's voice was demanding. It was his military voice.

"The monitor, the brain one, it went up and started beeping."

"Okay…"

"And then the doctors all rushed in. He's not moved but the line is up and moving. It's moving a lot, John. Not just the little wiggles and jumps."

John took a shaky breath on the other end of the phone, "Okay. It looks like he may be waking up. For better or for worse. I'll be there in less than five."

Greg frowned. John wasn't working and was supposed to get air and get away a little when Mycroft was in the room in the evenings. However, it seemed that John had just been hiding out in the hospital cantina and not actually getting out. That would certainly explain him looking so underfed. Greg went about calling everyone else that mattered or would care and told them the news. It wasn't good just yet. Nor was it bad. It was news. Mycroft, however, seemed to think it was a death sentence. He had taken to sitting in a chair, staring at his hands as they shook. Greg put his hand on Mycroft's shoulder. Mycroft shrugged it away and shook his head.

"He's going to hate me." Mycroft's voice was a whisper.

Greg shook his head and crouched next to Mycroft. He opened his mouth to speak. To reassure him of Sherlock's affection. To provide comfort. But he had none to provide. Nothing at all. So he just crouched there and looked at the doctors as they took notes and vital signs. And then, just as suddenly as they came, they left. They left Sherlock still lying in bed, eyes closed, and unmoving. Mycroft frowned and rushed into the room.

"Sherlock?" Mycroft laid his hand on Sherlock's.

The monitor spiked, but that was the only change. Sherlock didn't move. Mycroft sunk into the chair, remembering what John had said about Sherlock's chances at waking up and being entirely normal again. He sunk into the chair and took up the position he held for the first three days. This time he held it for four. People came and went. Greg went to work. Greg brought him food and clothes. Greg told him nice things. Mycroft stared. The one time Mycroft looked at Greg, they'd both had to look away, the guilt in Mycroft's gaze too overpowering. Greg stopped spending much time by Mycroft. Instead he sat in the chair on the other side of the room and worked. It was easier
and it also assuaged his guilt at leaving Mycroft alone. This continued for nearly a full week.

Five days after the first time Sherlock showed signs of improvement, all three men were sitting in his room. John was reading and hand his hand sitting next to Sherlock's. He never held Sherlock's hand, but he always sat like that. As if he was giving Sherlock the opportunity to hold his hand if he wanted to. Mycroft was sitting next to John and staring at the machines as he always did. His eyelids fluttered and he took short naps for a few minutes every once and a while, his exhaustion over powering. Greg was on the other side of the room working on cases and pleasantly engrossed in them.

As they sat, something changed. It was like a change in the air and timbre of the room. Nothing exact. Nothing real. Just a sudden shift that seemed to catch everyone's attention at once. John realized what it was before anyone else.

"His eyes are open." John's voice was a whisper.

They all stood up and looked. Sherlock's eyes were open and he was looking from one person to the other, smiling widely as if he'd not seen anyone for months. He opened his mouth and only a strange jumble of syllables fell out. Sherlock immediately frowned. It was an exaggerated and childlike gesture. All of Sherlock's ire and emotional casing seemed to have been stripped away from him. Mycroft's, however, was finally fully in tact again. His face was unreadable as he watched John frown and move closer to Sherlock.

"Sherlock. Hey, it's John. Can you say 'John' for me?" He leaned close to Sherlock and examined his pupils as he pressed the call button.

Sherlock mumbled and looked desperately at John, grabbing at his arm clumsily. Greg thought he looked like a baby, relearning his limbs. Mycroft was still a stone wall. The fabled "Ice Man" that Greg had never truly met because he'd melted him. It hurt more than watching Sherlock.

John seemed happy, though. "You can hear me, can't you Sherlock? Just nod." When Sherlock nodded John pressed a hand to the side of his face and smiled. "Good. That's really good. It's going to be okay. I promise. I still have to shout at you for about a half hour about pretending to be dead. Okay?"

Sherlock awkwardly covered John's hand on his cheek with his own and nodded again. John stepped back when the doctors piled in and began to check up on Sherlock. They were all pushed out of the room. After a few moments they pulled Sherlock out of the room and one of the doctors came up to Mycroft, smiling.
"Mr. Holmes, we have some good news."

Mycroft rolled his eyes coldly, "Yes, obviously."

"It's even better than him just being awake."

Mycroft's mask faltered and his anxiety slipped through, "What is it?"

"The current readings and his behavior indicate that he may make a full recovery, at least mentally. We can't be sure about full mobility yet, but he can move his hands and he can relearn to speak."

Mycroft stared for a moment and nodded. As soon as the doctor left, Mycroft pulled out his phone and stepped aside. John embraced Greg with arms that shook.

"He's okay. Oh God he's okay."

Greg held John tight and patted his back. "Yes he is. He's alright."

His comforting of John was interrupted by Mycroft returning and pocketing his phone.

"I've called Mummy."

John frowned, "You didn't call your mum?!"

Mycroft sent John a disdainful look. "Obviously not. Sherlock and I have an agreement that we will not force her to sit by our bedside while we die. It's hard enough on her that we both have risky professions. Therefore, we only call when it's fine or when the other is dead."

Greg nodded slowly, "So now she's been called."
Mycroft sighed and looked at him levelly. His voice was just above a whisper, "I believe we need to talk."

John took his cue to leave and disappeared. Greg just sat down in one of the waiting room chairs heavily. "Yeah…I suppose we do."

Mycroft tucked his hands behind his back and stood up taller. He looked like he was about to give a presentation to government officials. "I believe you are aware of the metaphorical elephant in the room. I cannot look at you without feeling guilty. Nor can you look at me without the same happening. It has consumed our relationship."

Greg leaned forward and pressed his face into his hands. He agreed with Mycroft. He really did. He’d planned to say all that himself. But hearing it said still hurt and he still couldn't help not wanting their relationship to end. "But you chose me. You love me enough that you chose me. Doesn't that count for something?"

"It means I love you enough that I've entirely lost touch with responsibility. That's not a healthy thing."

Greg looked up and stared at Mycroft with sad eyes, "Yeah. Okay. I'll move my things out."

Mycroft wanted to hold Greg close. He wanted to kiss his hair and tell him it would be okay. He wanted to tell Greg that he loved him enough to deal with any issues. Every fiber of Mycroft's being screamed for him to fall to his knees and Greg's feet and beg forgiveness for loving him so selfishly and completely. But he didn't. He kept his face impassive and nodded sharply as he spoke, "Thank you."

Greg stood up and walked away. Mycroft watched him go, letting his heartache play out on his face as Greg’s back retreated down the hall. He pressed his face into his hands for a moment, desperately trying to focus. His and Sherlock's mother would be at the hospital in a matter of hours and he had business to attend to. Primarily, finding John. The man was like the favorite toy of a small child. Sherlock would behave for the doctors and nurses if John was there. It didn't take Mycroft long as John had accidentally walked down a dead end hallway and was in earshot of the entire conversation he and Greg had just had. John smiled weakly as Mycroft spotted him and he slipped out of the hallway.

"We should go find where they took Sherlock." John reached out and held Mycroft's elbow, choosing not to mention what he'd just heard.
Mycroft was entirely thankful and allowed a small smile to slip past his mask, "Yes. He is probably causing a ruckus because you aren't there."

Mycroft was right. They found Sherlock by following a group of orderlies rushing towards a room. Sherlock was glaring and throwing things as he shouted unintelligible sounds. He managed to nearly speak as John rushed up to the bedside and admonished him for pitching a fit.

"Ohn." Sherlock relaxed and nodded.

John beamed and laughed, "Yeah. I'm here. I won't leave again. Now why are you pitching such a fit? They're just trying to help you."

Sherlock's face fell and he placed a hand on his leg. It was still clumsy but his motor control was already improving. He looked over to the doctor that had stopped cowering in a corner to hide from the objects Sherlock had been throwing and that now littered the floor.

"It's his legs. They have no feeling." The doctor smiled apologetically.

John's face fell and he put a hand on Sherlock's shoulder. "It's fine. It's okay. You're alive, Sherlock. That's what matters." he turned back to the doctor, "What about the speaking?"

"It's just aphasia. He can still hear us and think in words, but when he tries to say them it comes out wrong. It should clear up over the next few days. It's a common complication when a patient wakes from a coma."

John nodded and kept his hand on Sherlock's shoulder, "Will trying to talk help or is time the only cure?"

"Practicing helps. And the same goes for his legs. The spinal chord damage was all from the same shockwave. Nothing is severed. The pathways have just stopped working. There's a small chance they could start working again. And even if they don't it seems that it's true paraplegia. He's retained his ability to eat, digest, and use the toilet normally."

John grinned, "If he actually eats. This is the most weight I've ever seen on him."
Sherlock rolled his eyes and let out a series of vowels and consonants that made no sense, and yet still seemed cutting. Mycroft stepped forward and gently took his brother's hand only to have Sherlock glare and snatch it away.

"I've called Mummy." he sighed softly.

Sherlock moaned and rolled his eyes before launching into a rant that sounded entirely Sherlock, even if it wasn't words. John smiled and bent down to hug him. It cut Sherlock off mid sentence and he slowly wrapped his arms around John and hugged back. John didn't let him go for nearly a minute and when he did he wiped his eyes quickly.

"God I thought I'd really lost you…again. For real this time. When you're healthy again I'm going to chin you for what you did to me."

Sherlock smiled and held his hand out. When John took it he said something that sounded almost apologetic before letting John's hand go and turning to Mycroft, seeming to finish his rant. Mycroft only shook his head and sighed.

"Oh do shut up, Sherlock. I have some business to attend to. I'll return in a few hours when Mummy arrives." Mycroft stepped out before he could be stopped and went straight for his favorite Chinese take away restaurant. He couldn't go home, Greg would still be there, so he ate. He ate for all the days in the last weeks he hadn't. He ate two meals worth of food and when he finished his suit was already bagging off of him a bit less from to the fullness of his belly. He checked his watch and decided to risk a trip home for a fresh suit and a shower: he wanted to look presentable to his mother.

When he got there he immediately wished he hadn't. The flat was very obviously empty and the only remaining sign of Greg was his key sitting on table next to a letter. Mycroft opened it and read:

My Darling Mycroft,

I think all of my things have been removed, but if I'm wrong please just send anything you find to the Yard. I'll stay with friends for a few days until I can find a new flat. Don't worry about me. I've already made arrangements. As I packed I considered giving you back your anniversary gift to me. That letter where you told me you love me. But I can't do it. I can't give back your love. You did the right thing. I myself was going to leave once Sherlock woke up if you hadn't said something first. I know we're doomed now. I know it's all fucked. But I want you to know I still love you. I always will. And so I'm not going to give your love back. I'm going to cling to it desperately and hope that maybe some day you'll come back to it. Somehow this will all magically fix itself. But until then I'll
disappear and stay gone. I'll contact John when I intend to visit Sherlock so he can tell you to take a
walk. Please do so. I'd appreciate it.

Forever yours,

Greg

Mycroft choked down a nose in his throat as he set the letter aside and slipped the key into his
pocket. He clenched his hands into fists to push back the emotion and walked stiffly to the shower.
He made sure to keep it cold. Hot showers only made him think of Greg and wanking, two things
he desperately wanted but refused to allow himself to have. Mycroft was a strong man; the only man
stronger than Mycroft was Mycroft's inner voice that pushed him to be what others expected him to
be. So much weaker was the quiet voice that reminded him Greg never asked him to be anything but
himself.

He dried off, shaved, and dressed quickly before slipping into his favorite suit. He placed Greg's key
and letter in his suit jacket pockets, pressing a hand against each one before slipping into his car and
being driven to Bart's. When he got to Sherlock's room, Genevieve Holmes was already there,
dressed to the nines as usual, and fussing over her baby boy. John looked terrified and was sitting on
the other side of the bed just watching. Sherlock looked desperately at Mycroft when he walked in.
Both boys loved their mother but were entirely aware that she could be cloying at times. One of
those times was when she was worried. Mycroft cleared his throat and entered the room.

"Mummy, so good to see you." he smiled warmly but it didn't reach his eyes. Only Sherlock would
notice.

"My-my! Oh come here to Mummy." she cooed and threw her arms around him, holding tight.

Mycroft leaned down and pressed his face into her shoulder. For a moment he was a little boy again,
being held by his Mummy so that the bad things would go away. Except he was an adult and hugs
didn't make it all go away anymore. He pulled back slightly and smiled at her. "How are you?"

"Quite angry you didn't tell me sooner! But pleased everyone is fine." She sat next to Sherlock and
took his hand.

Mycroft smiled and moved to sit next to her. She began speaking but he didn't hear any of it. The
fatigue and stress of the last month seemed to hit him at once and he was almost instantly asleep, his
head falling forward to rest on the bed by Sherlock's now numb legs. When Mycroft finally woke
with a start it was to a nearly silent room. He blinked and looked around, taking a moment to realize
what had happened. His mother smiled and hushed him softly, pointing to John who had fallen
asleep as well. Sherlock had set a hand on John's head and was petting his hair softly.
"Did you sleep well, baby?" she patted his cheek.

"Quite. I didn't realize how tired I was." Mycroft gently smoothed his suit into place again.

"You slept through a lot of commotion. You must have been thoroughly exhausted."

"I was."

"John told me about what happened." Mummy Holmes held his gaze.

Mycroft quickly looked away and blushed. "I'm sorry."

"It's not your fault, my dear. That was an impossible situation. Though might I ask, where is this Greg?"

"We…we broke up." Mycroft frowned softly.

Sherlock frowned and looked at him sharply but didn't say a word; but Mycroft could see the question in his face.

"It was just too much, I think." Mycroft finally looked back to his mother.

She only stared at him for a long moment, her eyes searching as his and Sherlock's did. "You didn't love him as much as you thought you did."

It was wrong. Her deduction was wrong. He did love Greg that much. Thus having to end their relationship. But he let his mother believe she was correct. "Yes. I looked at him and realized I had misjudged us."

She nodded sadly and laid her hand on his knee, "It's okay. I just hope you learned your lesson."
Mycroft looked down at his shoes and nodded. It looked like contrition but it was actually heartache. He looked up when his hand resting on Sherlock’s bed was lifted. Sherlock had taken Mycroft’s hand and was holding it tight. He squeezed it hard and looked at him fiercely before looking down to where the fresh scar from the bullet’s exit was and then back to Mycroft before nodding and smiling. Mycroft saw and felt Sherlock’s meaning. He didn't blame Mycroft. Mycroft felt true relief wash over him for the first time in what seemed like ages. He smiled and squeezed back.

"Thank you. Both of you," he looked to his mother, "thank you for forgiving what I still consider to be an unforgivable act."

"Both my babies are alive. There is nothing to forgive." Mummy Holmes patted each boy’s cheek and stood, "Now, I’m simply exhausted and really must get some sleep. I’m not young enough to sleep in these hospital chairs anymore. Sherlock, I'll be back bright and early, okay?"

Sherlock nodded and softly said something that sounded vaguely like, "Okay."

As soon as Genevieve reached her car she made her way to Sherlock’s flat. She’d lifted John's keys earlier so she was able to let herself in. Much to her pleasure, she found the light already on. When she opened the door to the flat she was greeted with the face of a very startled Greg Lestrade.

"Gregory Lestrade I assume? I'm Genevieve Holmes." She extended her hand.

Greg stared for a second before setting his extra strong drink and cheap take away aide and standing, taking her hand softly. "You're…"

"I'm Mummy Holmes, yes."

"What are you doing here?"

"I'm here looking for you, actually." she began to walk around the flat and examine it.

"Me? But this is…"
"Sherlock and John's flat, yes I know. But after Mycroft said the two of you had broken up I assumed you'd be here. You and John are very close and, moreover, this flat isn't being used right now. The perfect place for a newly homeless man to stay."

Greg sat back down on the sofa when she primly sat in Sherlock's chair. "Okay…but why?"

"Because we need to have a talk, you and I."

"A talk? About what?"

"About my son, Mycroft, and the arrogance and egotism you have shown in your relationship with him."

"Arro--I'm sorry, what?"

Genevieve pulled Greg's letter to Mycroft out of her purse and laid it on the table. "My son had this in his suit jacket. When he fell asleep I relieved him of its burden."

Greg paled, "That's private. It's between him and me."

"Between he and I. And it's not private. He's my son. And this alleged love drove my good little Mycroft to push his baby brother into the line of fire willingly. That is not the son I raised. That is not my Mycroft. You know nothing about him you insolent man." her voice was filed with acrid anger, "He is a good man, but he is so terribly private. You lived with him so I assume you knew about the insects, but did you ever see his tattoo?"

Greg's mouth fell open and panic whirled through his mind, "T…tattoo?"

She grinned wickedly, "Yes. Tiny beetle on the back of his left knee. Oh but that could be excused. You've not been together that long and Mycroft's a private man, I'm sure he likes it with the lights off. But what about his ex-wife?"
Greg felt his courage swell at that, "I know about her. I know all about her."

"Oh? Did he tell you he got her pregnant? It was a miscarriage, don't worry, but it was the most frightened I think I'd ever seen him when he told me she was with child."

"No…he didn't tell me that." Greg's face fell again.

"Exactly. You know part of my son, that's all. But somehow you've convinced yourself and him that you two share a grand love that will conquer time and this familial betrayal. But it won't. It's a vague inclination of true love. So don't try and see him again. Don't make that mistake." She stood up and quickly rushed out of the room.

Greg sat there and stared. His heart didn't break. It wasn't even there anymore. It was gone. He was hollow. Greg curled up on himself and wept silently at the loss of the idea and the history he'd had with Mycroft. It seemed that he had truly never known the Ice Man.

At Bart's, Mycroft had fallen asleep again and Sherlock was whispering and speaking quietly, practicing sounds and words. He'd been able to get real words out since about two hours after their mother had left, an hour after Mycroft had fallen asleep again. However, he wanted to have some mastery over speaking before he spoke again. Another hour passed and he felt confident enough to say what he needed to. He touched Mycroft's head to wake him. Mycroft sat up and looked worried.

"What is it Sherlock?"

Sherlock held out a hand and pressed a finger to Mycroft's lips to silence him. He took a deep breath and spoke slowly, his words still sounding muddled and slightly mispronounced like a toddler's, "You…are an idiot."

End Notes

Title comes from Wilfred Owen's "Dulce et Decorum Est"

"GAS! Gas! Quick, boys!-- An ecstasy of fumbling,
Fitting the clumsy helmets just in time"
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