Two Solitudes

by Mice

Summary

Mycroft does not take threats to Lestrade's life terribly well.

Notes

Proof-loofa by Random-Nexus, canvas-covered-watermelons, and Ghislainem70. This is the first time I've tried my hand at Beeblock, and at a Mystrade story, so I hope you'll enjoy my being mean to Lestrade.

~~Love consists in this, that two solitudes protect and touch and greet each other.~~

Rainer Maria Rilke, Letters to a Young Poet~~

He'd been standing by the window for at least the last fifteen minutes in a haze of grating annoyance, staring out at the rain. It had been coming down hard all day, streaking the glass and falling in harsh lines under the lights along Baker Street. Sherlock was sawing at his violin, not bothering to attempt anything even vaguely resembling music -- unless maybe you counted John Cage, which John most manifestly did not -- and he'd had about enough of his flatmate's "boredom." He debated wandering down to the pub for a late one just to get away from the gawdawful noise as he leaned against the window sill.

A squeal of tyres snapped his attention toward a car about a block away, moving fast. It swerved
toward the pavement as it approached 221 and the door opened. Something -- a body? -- rolled out as the car sped away.

"Bloody -- Sherlock!" John ran for the door. "Sherlock!" The maddening caterwauling of the violin stopped as John's feet thundered on the stairs and he could hear Sherlock running behind him as he slammed the front door open. Mrs Hudson's voice sounded, muffled, from inside. She'd been complaining about the violin less than twenty minutes ago.

He was in the street in a breathless moment, wondering if the person who'd been dumped was still alive. A hand fell on his shoulder as headlamps came bearing down on him, brakes squealing as the vehicle skidded on the wet street. He grabbed the limp body and held on, scrabbling backward as Sherlock dragged him out of the path of the car; it was a miracle that none of them had been hit.

Sherlock scanned the area as John lay the man carefully on his side. A bag covered his head. His wrists were bound behind his back with a ziptie. There was fresh blood, a fair bit of it, soaked into the coat and staining the bag. It wasn't just fresh stuff, either; some had been there probably for hours, and there was dried blood as well. Whoever had done this had been doing it for a couple of days, at a guess. John struggled for a moment with the cord that held the bag in place, tugging it loose, then pulled the bag away.

"Greg, my god." Lestrade was badly injured; he was still breathing but John wasn't sure how long that was going to last if something wasn't done fast. "Sherlock, call an ambulance!"

"Did you see the number--"

"Damn it, Sherlock, call the bloody fucking ambulance now!"

Sherlock dropped to one knee next to him, his mobile already at his ear, as a small crowd began to gather at the scene. The driver of the car that had nearly hit them, a kid barely out of his teens, came running up.

"Are you okay? Did I hit you? Oh, god, he's hurt, did I do that? Where the hell did you come from?"

"Mrs Hudson!" John bellowed, "Mrs Hudson, get the first aid kit!"

It was going to be a long, long night.

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John stood in the hospital lav, the soap suds turning red with Greg Lestrade's blood as he scrubbed his hands. "Greg wasn't even working, Sherlock. He was supposed to be on holiday."

"Obvious!" Sherlock paced the floor in front of the stalls restlessly, staring at his phone as he texted. "Though it would be worthwhile to look into the open cases he'd left. They don't close just because one of the officers is on holiday."

"And why would someone dump him in front of our place? Do you think... I mean, do you think it was Moriarty? Was it a warning? Some kind of sick message?" John watched his friend in the mirror, angry and wishing there was more he could do. Greg was in surgery and would be for a while. He'd still been unconscious when they'd got him to A&E. It wasn't looking good.

"No," Sherlock stuffed his mobile back in his coat pocket. "This was dull. Ordinary. Moriarty is far more creative." He snorted. "Beating Lestrade half to death and dumping him from a moving vehicle? Amateur."
John turned back to scrubbing blood from beneath his nails, too used to Sherlock's callous attitude. That it was being applied to one of their friends bothered him, but it was less than surprising. "Well, all right. It is rather not his style. Still, it has to mean something."

"Oh, it was a message all right." Sherlock met John's eyes in the mirror. "It just wasn't a message for me."

"What?" He shook water from his hands and turned to stare at Sherlock. "But--"

"It was meant for Mycroft."

John blinked, startled. "Wait, Mycroft? That doesn't even make sense."

"Really, John, they've been sniffing around one another since Lestrade's divorce. It's disgusting." Sherlock grimaced. "God knows what Lestrade sees in my brother," he muttered.

"Wait, Greg and... and Mycroft? But--" That was a little too much to take in. The thought wasn't 'disgusting' but it was a bit brain-breaking.

Sherlock spun abruptly and started for the door. "I have to find out if anyone actually saw a number plate. Idiots!"

"Sherlock!" John's only answer was the sound of the door closing behind him. "Great. Just great. Leave me to give a statement to the police by myself."

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John had been waiting by Greg's bed in ICU for more than four hours when Mycroft arrived. The man's eyes and mouth were tight, his shoulders stiff, and his knuckles were white as he clutched the handle of his umbrella. "How is he?"

Sighing, John shook his head. "Hasn't regained consciousness. It's been over seven hours that we know of. We don't know when he'll wake up. You haven't talked to the surgeon already?" He was surprised. Mycroft always seemed to know damned near everything.

"Of course I have. I wanted to hear it from you." Mycroft rested the tip of his umbrella on the floor, leaning slightly into it. He looked as much worn as he did tense. "What happened? And what has Sherlock found? He hasn't texted me since you arrived at the hospital."

"He texted you? Where were you, then? It's been an age."

"Out of the country. I arrived as soon as I could." The words were clipped and sharp. "Now please, tell me what happened." Mycroft went to Greg's side and leaned over him, reaching out with one hand, carefully touching his bruised and bandaged face.

"He'd been drugged. We don't know how long they had him, whoever they are, but he's got broken ribs, a ruptured spleen, a punctured lung, and a severe concussion. He's lucky to be alive."

With a sigh, Mycroft let his fingers trail down Greg's arm. They closed around his limp hand. "If you don't mind, John..." He shot a glance at the door.

John nodded and stood, offering Mycroft his chair. "Right. I really ought to get back home. I need some sleep; it's been more than a day since I've even seen my bed. God knows when Sherlock will be back, and I'd like to be ready if he needs my help." He didn't really know what kind of a relationship Greg and Mycroft had, but it was obviously closer than Sherlock's words had implied.
This wasn't just 'sniffing around.' It was genuine concern, maybe a lot more than that.

"Yes, that would be wise." Mycroft didn't bother to look at him, his attention already back on Greg's still form.

"If... if there's anything I can do--"

"Thank you." It was a dismissal. About what he'd expected, really.

John sighed and grabbed the jacket Mrs Hudson had brought for him. "Right, then. I'll probably see you later."

Mycroft didn't even look up as he departed.

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The ligature marks and abrasions on Gregory Lestrade's wrists and throat sent a silent shiver down Mycroft's spine. He'd been bound for quite some time. At least two days, Mycroft surmised. The surgeon had given him as much information as she'd had available on the injuries he'd sustained. John Watson's brief summary covered the most salient points.

Mycroft sat in the chair close by the bedside that John had vacated, deflating slowly now that he was alone. Sherlock's text had arrived at an extremely inconvenient moment, but it hadn't taken more than an hour to sort the situation enough that it could safely be left in the hands of one of his aides. Twenty minutes later, he'd been in the air, issuing instructions and making inquiries.

His mobile vibrated and he pulled it from his breast pocket.

GL checked in for his flight. Never passed security checkpoint. Currently examining CCTV footage from LHR. Baker St CCTV shows number plate on vehicle deliberately obscured. - A

He had expected the number plate to be untraceable. Greg having been taken from Heathrow without raising an alarm, however, was an extremely unpleasant surprise. It had been professionally done. His hands didn't shake as he sent a reply.

Thank you. Please arrange for his transfer to a safe facility. - MH

Immediately, sir. - A

Despite the fact that Mycroft Holmes kept a nearly nonexistent public profile, anyone who had created for himself a position like his own would, perforce, accumulate enemies. He was well aware that he was possessed of many of them, some of them extremely powerful, from a number of countries and organizations. Most of them could be immediately eliminated from the pool of potential malefactors. A few had no ability to act, even covertly, on British soil. The majority of the others had no idea that his interest in a certain Detective Inspector went beyond what would be necessitated by his brother's public association with the Met as a consulting detective. It narrowed the list considerably but, without further information, he could draw no useful conclusions.

He thought it likely that the perpetrator would make himself known soon. 'Messages' like this were designed to attract attention, or to evoke fear. It would be to his advantage if Sherlock or his own people could identify the enemy first, of course. Images from the Heathrow CCTV cameras would be helpful. Anthea would no doubt contact him again within the hour with information.

Mycroft sighed almost silently, turning his full attention back to the man in the bed. Greg's labored
breathing was eased by a CPAP, but Mycroft was grateful that he was, in fact, breathing on his own. A heart monitor beeped steadily; Mycroft found the sound reassuring. Tubes, IV's, and wires emanated from Greg's body and limbs in a disturbing array. His face, where he was not bandaged, was a mass of bruises -- his swollen eyes and split lips were motionless, a map of abuse applied by at least three assailants that Mycroft could discern.

Anger like ice crackled inside him. "Greg," he whispered, gently caressing the man's bruised jaw with the backs of his fingers. He hardly dared touch him with more pressure than that. Mycroft had rarely touched Greg so intimately before. There was certainly a mutual attraction between them but, between Greg's still raw emotional state after his divorce and the never-ending commitments of their work, they had been cautious with one another. He was furious, knowing that even this tenuous emotional connection between them had been exploited, but it had served to make him extremely aware of the genuine intensity of his interest in the man.

Once Greg was conscious, they would discuss the matter.

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Transferring Greg to a private, protected medical facility was accomplished with a minimum of fuss and bother. Mycroft felt a weight lift from his entire being as Greg was finally settled in the new, well-appointed, and exceedingly secure room. While Mycroft doubted there would be a second attack on the man, it never hurt to take precautions.

About an hour later, Anthea contacted him again, informing him that the footage from Heathrow had been altered to remove any evidence of Gregory Lestrade's presence at the airport. While annoying, it did once again narrow the field of potential perpetrators to two or three rivals in his own government: Hugh Ng, Carlyle Thompson, or possibly Andrew Berkeley. They were all in different offices but all had the ability to alter CCTV footage without Mycroft's knowledge, and all of whom might potentially know of, or at least suspect, his affection for Greg. Their affiliation with Her Majesty's government would simplify matters somewhat and meant he could deal with the situation with less chance of creating an international incident. Mycroft preferred tidy solutions.

The question was, why?

He was too tired to give the issue proper focus. Mere rivalry, no matter how acrimonious, was not enough to explain these events. There was an additional factor somewhere that he was missing. Sleep and food were necessary. Mycroft sat briefly on the edge of Greg's bed, taking in the damage done to him and hoping he would regain consciousness soon, before leaving him to the care of the staff and his personally chosen security personnel. He would return in a few hours, more able to trace the threads and discern their patterns.

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"I'm sorry, sir, he still hasn't regained consciousness." Mycroft and the doctor in charge of Greg's treatment walked at a steady pace along the corridor, Mycroft's umbrella clicking on the floor with each step.

Mycroft knew that she had absolutely no control over when Greg's coma would end, but it didn't stop his momentary flash of anger. It felt like a betrayal. "Has there been any change at all, Dr Falstan?"

She nodded, an expression of guarded optimism in her hazel eyes. "He's stabilized and no longer in need of the CPAP. The oxygen mask has been replaced with a cannula."
"You have no estimate of when he might awaken."

"We believe sometime in the next few hours. There are no guarantees."

He nodded, not slackening his pace. "I am aware." Mycroft noted with approval the two familiar security guards outside Greg's door. Considering the abilities of the enemy who had abducted Greg in the first place, he was taking no chances. Every guard assigned to this post was someone he recognized personally and knew he could trust with his own life.

Dr Falstan examined Greg and updated his chart notes while Mycroft hung his coat and umbrella; she then left Mycroft alone with him. Mycroft simply stood near the bed for several minutes, just looking at him, wishing that Greg would open his eyes. The sound of a familiar pace echoed in the corridor, growing closer. A moment later he felt someone enter the room.

"Good afternoon, Sherlock."

"Mycroft."

"Have you found anything that I did not?" He turned to look at his brother. Sherlock obviously hadn't slept since last time he'd seen him.

Sherlock shook his head. "No."

Mycroft nodded and sat in the chair next to Greg's bed, resting his hand on the sheets beside the man's arm. "I've narrowed down the potential perpetrators to three likely candidates." His fingers, of their own accord, slowly traced a tiny trail back and forth along the line of Greg's wrist.

"What happened to 'caring is not an advantage,' brother?" Sherlock asked, a surprising hint of kindness in his voice.

"This is precisely why it is not, Sherlock," Mycroft murmured, looking at Greg's face, "yet I find I am unable to help myself." He looked back up at Sherlock. "As you seem unable to help caring about John Watson." There was no malice in his statement, simply the acknowledgement of fact. Sherlock's face closed slightly, not wanting to acknowledge his own vulnerability. "And don't think I'm not aware that Greg is one of the few people you've allowed close to you. You'd not be investigating anything so seemingly pedestrian otherwise."

"When is he likely to wake?"

"There's no way to tell. Dr Falstan hopes within the next few hours. As do I. If he is able to tell us anything about the men who did this to him--"

"--Finding them will be much easier. Considering his condition, they no doubt expected him to die before he was taken to A&E."

"Quite." But he had not, and Mycroft could be nothing other than thankful for this small mercy.

"You'll text me when he awakens."

"Of course." Sherlock might not aid Mycroft when asked -- or, for that matter, ordered -- but in this he could see plainly that his brother had the intention of tracking down everyone involved in injuring Gregory Lestrade. Mycroft felt a certain savage satisfaction at the thought. Sherlock swirled dramatically, as always, and swept out of the room. Mycroft hesitated for a moment then took Greg's hand. He settled in to wait, pulling his mobile from his pocket and opening a file so that he could continue to work.
He had been going through a list of priorities for the next day's agenda when he noted a shift in the rhythm of the heart monitor. Mycroft dropped his mobile back into his pocket and noted a similar shift in Greg's respiration. Leaning closer, he touched Greg's chin carefully. "Gregory. Greg, can you hear me?" He brushed hair back from Greg's brow with a soft motion of his fingers.

Greg made a small sound, nearly a whimper.


The change in the monitor readings brought the duty nurse, swiftly followed by Dr Falstan, to Greg's room. Mycroft moved his chair back to give them room, knowing they needed to assess Greg's condition as he returned to consciousness, if he did. The signs, at least, were positive. It was nearly half an hour before Greg's swollen eyes fluttered open, unfocused; another five before he tried to speak. While Mycroft was an incredibly patient man when necessary, this wait was one of the most painful he'd ever endured. As Dr Falstan assessed his condition, Mycroft texted Sherlock.

He is conscious again. I don't know for how long. - MH

Sherlock's reply arrived almost immediately.

On our way. - SH

Gregory was sleeping again before the doctor had finished her assessment. "This is very good, though," she said. "He did respond well and he should wake again when he's rested a bit. I'm very pleased, Mr Holmes."

"I should like to speak with him next time, if I may."

She nodded. "Provided he's awake long enough, I certainly have no objection. It will be good for him to see a friendly face, just don't press him too much. He's still very weak." Dr Falstan and the nurse left him, the young man giving him a sympathetic glance on the way out the door.

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Sherlock and John had come and gone before Greg woke again. Sherlock had not taken it well, having for some reason expected to be able to interrogate the man when he arrived. Mycroft knew that Sherlock needed to speak to him, but was glad it hadn't happened quite so soon, despite their need for information.

Fortunately, a great deal of Mycroft's work could be done anywhere that was reasonably secure. Anthea brought him several folders that kept him occupied while Greg slept, and a meal, as well as keeping him abreast of his ongoing investigation into the incident. He would not be able to spend more than a couple of days like this, entirely away from his office and not on call, but what time he had available would be spent by Greg's side.

It was late evening before Greg woke again. It was easier this time, and he was coherent almost immediately, if somewhat disoriented. His voice was rough and his speech a bit broken due to his condition. Mycroft sat by Greg's hip after the doctor left, and took his hand. "I cannot tell you how relieved I am to see you awake."

Greg's fingers closed around Mycroft's hand, squeezing slightly. "Wasn't expecting you here," he murmured. Speaking was obviously taking a great deal of effort but Mycroft knew he could be quite tenacious.

"Why would I not be here?" Mycroft rested Greg's hand against his chest, warm over his waistcoat.
"Surely you don't believe my interest in you is anything less than genuine."

He shook his head in a minute, painful movement. "Course not."

"I hesitate to ask so soon, but do you remember anything about the last few days?"

"Bit fuzzy," Greg admitted. "Was at th'airport. Some young bloke, dark hair, little shorter than me... bumped into me. Felt a jab, but he was... was wearing a spikey leather jacket. Apologized t'me. By th'time I realized I'd been drugged, was too out of it to... to do anything."

Mycroft nodded. "The CCTV footage at Heathrow had been tampered with. There was no record of your abduction."

"Damn." Greg was tiring quickly from their talk, starting to lose his breath.

"Rest for a few minutes, Greg. Just rest. You're going to exhaust yourself."

It was about ten minutes before Greg spoke again. "Was four of 'em, I think. Never saw 'em. Four voices, anyway." Mycroft nodded, not wishing to interrupt. "Kept... kept asking where th'information was. No... no idea what they wanted."

"Did they ask about anything else?"

"Somebody named Brasser. Never heard of him."

Mycroft's eyes narrowed. "I have."

Greg stared at him for a moment. "Good. Maybe we can find out who did this."

"I'll be able to, yes." There was a brief silence, and Greg attempted to smile but grimaced in pain as the movement aggravated his injuries. "Shall I call the doctor for you?"

"No, just... hurts a lot," Greg said, his voice quiet and strained.

Mycroft nodded. "I'll inquire about additional pain medication." He raised Greg's fingers to his lips and pressed a soft kiss to them. "I don't wish to see you hurting." Greg traced Mycroft's lower lip with one finger. There was something indefinable in his eyes.

"Mycroft."

"Yes?"

"Thank you. For being here."

"Try to sleep if you can." He placed Greg's hand gently back on the bed. "I have a number of things to look into now that I have more information. I'll be right here."

Greg sighed. His eyes closed as Mycroft summoned the duty physician. Things were decidedly better than they had been only an hour ago. He was quite pleased.

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Everything hurt. It was more a haze than anything sharp and particular but it was bad. Greg realized that he didn't particularly care; he seemed entirely distanced from his body. He had to be on the really good stuff, then. Opening his eyes was an effort but, when he did, Mycroft was there. Still there. There again, maybe. It didn't really matter which, he supposed. Mycroft was there. That pleased him.
A lot. Maybe more than it ought to, but he wasn't in a position to care much about that, either.

"Are you feeling at all better?" Mycroft's voice was soft and the concern on his face was like water in the desert.

Greg thought about it for a moment, trying to focus. Yeah, not so much. "Not really."

Mycroft nodded. "I thought as much." Mycroft took his hand. That felt nice, at least. "We've been busy while you've been asleep."

"Knew you would." He just wanted to lie there and float. This was important, though. He watched as Mycroft picked up a photo, turned it toward him.

"Do you recognize this man, Greg?" It took a moment for his eyes to focus properly. Dirty blond hair. Grey eyes. Glasses. Medium skin tone, some freckles. Thin. It rang some bells. He thought for a while, feeling sluggish and a bit thick. He hated the feeling.

Eventually, Greg nodded. "Yeah. Can't... can't place him, though. One of my cases, I think. Ask Donovan."

"This," Mycroft said, "is Frederick Brasser. He was, no doubt, using an alias when he came to your attention. He went missing two weeks ago." He set the photo down and enclosed Greg's hand in both of his own. Mycroft's hands were warm.

The timeframe helped place it. "Oh. Yeah. Definitely one of mine. Name... escapes me." He tried to think, but it was hard to get through the fog. Greg shook his head. "Hard to focus."

"I understand. The 'information' you were abducted over is very likely in your evidence room. It is, I'm afraid, a matter of national security."

For a moment, he wanted to be angry that a case was going to be taken out of his hands by the government. Sally Donovan was going to be furious. "As long as you get the bastards that did it," Greg said. He'd deal with the fallout later. The pain was like a weight on his chest.

The expression on Mycroft's face went cold, dangerous. "We will, Greg. I can promise you that."

Greg believed him.

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He sat in the Stranger's Room in the Diogenes Club, sipping a small glass of sherry. When his guest was ushered into the room, Mycroft gestured to the chair beside him and set his glass down.

"Carlyle."

"Mycroft. To what do I owe the pleasure." His face bore little expression as he sat.

"I believe," Mycroft said, pulling a credit card from his pocket, "you were looking for this when you had Detective Inspector Lestrade abducted from Heathrow."

Carlyle Thompson's mouth twisted into a tight smirk. He held out his hand. "I should like the card."

Mycroft pocketed it again. "What makes you think I would give it to you? Traitors are something of a liability, after all."

Carlyle pulled his mobile from his pocket and pulled up a file. "This might be persuasive." He held it out, screen toward Mycroft. It was a photo of Gregory Lestrade, asleep, in his secured hospital room.
The photo made him look frighteningly vulnerable. Mycroft looked up at Carlyle, who grinned maliciously. Carlyle folded his arms. "Well?"

"I do not take kindly to such threats." The photo meant that Carlyle had someone - possibly more than one person - inside the facility. Unacceptable. He slipped a hand into the pocket of his jacket, taking his mobile in hand.

"I'll have the card now."

"I don't think so." Mycroft touched the mobile just so, sending his signal, and four very large, very armed men entered the room.

Carlyle looked up at them, raising an indolent eyebrow. "Do you honestly think this is going to intimidate me, Mycroft? Your little bit of rough will be dead in another fifteen minutes if my agents don't hear from me. I suggest you return the card."

"Gentlemen," Mycroft said, his voice glacial. The four men took Carlyle, cuffing him and escorting him toward a hidden door in the wall.

"I didn't think even you were such a cold bastard, Mycroft," Carlyle spat. "Willing to let your pet die."

"You've threatened two things I hold very dear," Mycroft said, allowing none of the frozen fury he felt to enter his voice. "Your network will be destroyed within the hour, and you will be unable to touch Gregory." He stood as Carlyle was dragged from the room. A swift motion brought his mobile to his ear.

"Anthea, who is with DI Lestrade right now?"

"Your brother, sir, and Doctor Watson."

"Thank you. Please initiate our cleanup action as planned."

"Yes, sir."

"Carlyle has people inside the facility. We cannot trust anyone. Have the place locked down and take six agents to the site to contain the problem. Time is of the essence."

"Yes, sir."

Mycroft ended the call and texted John Watson, knowing Sherlock was less likely to look at a message from him immediately.

Assassination attempt on Lestrade imminent. Allow NO ONE into the room. I will be there soon with backup. - MH

Right. Get here quickly. - JW

He hurried for the door, his stomach a cold knot. Despite their differences, Mycroft trusted Sherlock to keep Greg safe, for Greg's own sake if not for Mycroft's. John's bravery had never been in question, nor his willingness to put himself between someone he cared for and an armed enemy. They were the best possible people to be in the room with Greg right now. Carlyle's agent -- or agents -- on the inside could be anyone. Still, John and Sherlock's presence didn't alleviate his worry in the least.
Mycroft had spent the last two days using every resource at his disposal wrapping up his planned destruction of the network Carlyle had developed. Knowing that Frederick Brasser had been one of Greg's cases had confirmed for him that Carlyle was, in fact, the traitor he'd been closing in on for months. The man had obviously thought Mycroft outmaneuvered when he'd had someone placed in the secure medical facility, but Mycroft had been prepared for a threat of some sort.

The fake credit card, taken from Brasser's wallet, had held copies of highly classified files intended for sale to the North Koreans; they were more than enough to entirely destabilize the region. It had already been erased; even if Mycroft had been killed, the information would not have fallen into the traitor's hands. Brasser's murder had been interrupted before the card could be recovered, the assassin fleeing the scene to avoid detection. No one in Mycroft's office had known Brasser's alternative identity and so the death had fallen through the cracks, marked in Greg's file as a failed mugging.

Mycroft feared that Sherlock and John would not be sufficient to keep Greg alive until backup arrived and it left a chill in his bones. He was uncertain how the assassination would be attempted. There was no way for him or his people to arrive at the facility before Carlyle's fifteen minutes slipped away.

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By the time Mycroft arrived, it was all over. He intensely disliked getting his own hands dirty, though he would gladly have made an exception in this case had it been necessary. He was, whether he wanted to admit it or not, feeling extremely protective and deeply angry about the threat to Greg's life.

The would-be assassin had been a phlebotomy lab tech. He'd attempted to enter the room under the pretext of a scheduled blood draw, intending to poison Greg with a drug that would produce a fatal seizure within a few minutes of entering his system.

One of Mycroft's trusted security agents had been involved as well, though Sherlock, John, and the other agent were able to stop the attempt without bloodshed. Gregory hadn't been able to get out of bed to assist in apprehending the man when the attempt was initiated. Mycroft was relieved Greg hadn't injured himself trying. It was unnerving enough knowing there had been a vulnerability in a place that he hadn't anticipated, and that Greg's life had once again been endangered. He berated himself for failing to consider the possibility of one of his own security personnel being a part of the plot.

It was nearly an hour before Mycroft was alone with Greg again. There was the matter of ordering an investigation into his security agents; Mycroft was more shaken than he wanted to acknowledge regarding the infiltration by Carlyle's man. For a moment he found himself wishing guillotines were still in fashion. That, however, passed quickly; reason must rule, even when the threat was far too close to his heart. Sherlock stayed and made rather a nuisance of himself until John took him by the arm and bodily removed him. "Leave them be, Sherlock," he'd insisted. "I think they need some time alone, yeah?"

"It's over, then?" Greg asked, once it was quiet. He'd been getting better, though he was still in a great deal of pain. He had been dizzy and half asleep, barely able to move because of his pain medication. Despite this, he was likely to be released for recovery under care at home within the next few days. Dr Falstan had estimated about a six week timeframe before Greg could return to work.

Mycroft sat with him. "Yes. I... Greg, would you take it amiss if I asked you to stay at my residence during your recovery? It would be easier to keep someone available to assist you until you're able to manage on your own again." He did not mention that it would also be a more secure location than Greg's own flat.
Greg hesitated for a moment, looking torn. Finally, he nodded. "Yeah, thanks, if you're sure. I didn't really know what I was going to do for the first week or so."

"I'm quite certain. Thank you for agreeing. I shouldn't like to insist, but I did want to be assured you'd be properly cared for."

Greg looked down at his hands for a moment, then back up at Mycroft. His face was still badly bruised and he moved cautiously, obviously still in pain. "So, this... this thing we have between us..."

"I've come to care for you a great deal, Greg, but that isn't a condition of your staying with me."

"I know. Wasn't trying to imply it might be. I'd still like to talk about it."

"Do you think you might be ready for us to take this further?" Mycroft had been hoping, but he knew Greg had been hesitant.

"Before this, I'd have said no. I was too much of a mess after the divorce, but you knew that."

Mycroft nodded. "I could see how difficult it was for you."

"I needed to be sure I wasn't going into this as some rebound thing. I didn't want to do that to you."

The look in Greg's eyes was earnest; Mycroft thought he could lose himself in their depths.

"I can't say as I'd have cared for that, no."

"Now I know it's not."

Mycroft took a small, bracing breath, his heart beating more quickly. "May I kiss you, Greg?" he whispered.


Mycroft backed away quickly, chagrined. "Sorry."

"No, 's okay. Just, split lip, you know?" He looked a bit sheepish. "Here, let's try it again."

With a nod, Mycroft gathered Greg into his arms and kissed him gently. "May I kiss you, Greg?" he whispered.


Mycroft backed away quickly, chagrined. "Sorry."

"No, 's okay. Just, split lip, you know?" He looked a bit sheepish. "Here, let's try it again."

With a nod, Mycroft gathered Greg into his arms and kissed him gently. Greg's breath caught and his mouth opened beneath Mycroft's; he slipped his arms about Mycroft's body and held him, caressing his back with one hand. Mycroft buried his fingers in Greg's greying hair, delighted at the feel of it under his palm. Greg made a soft, pleased sound and Mycroft echoed it, slipping his tongue between Greg's lips; Greg sucked on it, soft and sensual. Mycroft couldn't help the quiet groan that escaped him. Breathless, he pulled slowly away, caressing Greg's lips with his own as they ended the kiss.

"I've wanted to do that for a very long time," Mycroft murmured.

Greg, still breathless, said, "Worth the wait, I think." He smiled, eyes alight.

"Very much so," Mycroft agreed. He leaned in for another kiss.

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Greg was chafing after ten days at Mycroft's under doctor's orders to take things easy. He wasn't bedridden, thank god, but moving around with broken ribs was a lot more painful than it had any right to be, and it tended to make him irritable. Mycroft had been incredibly patient, when he wasn't off at work; Greg appreciated it, as he knew he could be a bit insufferable when he was hurting this
The place was a lot more posh than Greg had ever expected to inhabit, even temporarily. The hired nurse, a young bloke who seemed awfully sharp for his age, had been a great help without intruding too much into Greg's privacy, or his pride. Greg knew he still needed a little help with things but was starting to resent it; it was inevitable, and he'd been laid up with a broken leg a few years ago, so he knew he'd just have to wait it out. That didn't make his situation any easier to endure.

When Mycroft was home, they spent time talking. It had taken a while for Mycroft to start talking about himself much, but Greg could see that he was trying. He'd obviously spent most of his life entirely buttoned up, and it was amazing to Greg that he would offer anything at all.

The bruises on his face and body were turning absolutely horrifying colours, but there was nothing for it. He was surprised Mycroft could stand to look at him, really. He could hardly look at himself in the mirror, what with the unnatural shades he was turning. At least the swelling was going down pretty well. It was something.

"Good evening."

Greg looked up from the book he was reading. "Hi."

Mycroft sat with him on the couch, giving him one of those x-ray looks the Holmes brothers were famous for. "Are you feeling well enough to go out for dinner tonight? I know you've been feeling somewhat restless, not really being able to leave the house."

He thought about it for a moment, assessing how he felt. "Maybe, yeah. Probably shouldn't be out too long, though. I'm not sure how well the ribs would take being in a car." Greg touched his face. "I'll probably frighten the tourists."

Mycroft gave a small, wry chuckle, matched by the edge of a smile he allowed. "I don't think that will be an issue. The place I was considering has private dining areas."

Greg nodded. "All right, then. I probably ought to change into something presentable. He'd spent most of the last ten days in loose clothing and a dressing gown when he wasn't actually in pyjamas. Any pressure on his ribs was still too uncomfortable to deal with for long. "Er, what counts as 'presentable' for this, anyway?" He didn't think he had anything at Mycroft's that even vaguely qualified.

"I've had something prepared for you." Mycroft stood and offered him a hand. "If you would."

He put a bookmark in the volume and set it on the occasional table. "Right, then." He took Mycroft's hand and eased himself off the couch. It was getting slightly less painful to do alone, but a little help tended to make it more pleasant. "Thanks."

In Greg's room, he found a very expensive suit waiting for him. Probably worth a couple months of his salary. "Mycroft?"

"Getting you in to see a tailor would have been problematic. This should do, though." He seemed vaguely apologetic.

"Mycroft, this is a bit much, don't you think?"

Mycroft gave him a puzzled look. "No. It's entirely proper for the place we're going. If anything, it's a little less than I would have liked for you. I should very much like to see you in a bespoke suit instead of this thing. When you're feeling better, perhaps."
"I... ah... All right, then. Thanks. Give me a few minutes to have a shave and get dressed." Greg found himself vaguely embarrassed by the whole situation, but set to putting himself together as Mycroft stepped out of the room.

About the time Greg was working on the tie, Mycroft tapped on the door and entered. He looked Greg over, an appreciative expression on his face. "Allow me, please."

"Hm?"

Mycroft came to him and gently took the tie from his hands. In a moment, it was perfectly tied in a full Windsor, and Mycroft smiled at him. Leaning in, he applied a soft kiss to Greg's lips. "You do look quite dashing, you know." Glancing at the mirror, Greg had to agree that, aside from the bruising, he actually looked really good. Dark pinstripe suit, a tie that didn't clash with the bruises, gold cufflinks -- the works. Fancier than anything he'd ever had before. Mycroft took him carefully into his arms and Greg returned the embrace. "Thank you for allowing me to do this for you."

Greg rested his chin on Mycroft's shoulder. "I'm the one who should be thanking you." He held Mycroft more closely, enjoying the feeling of their bodies pressed together. Mycroft's hand skimmed up his back and into his hair and he drew Greg into a slow, deep kiss that left Greg breathless and tingling.

"If you want to take me out for dinner, we'd best go now," Greg said, "or we might not be leaving this room."

Mycroft's grin was absolutely wicked. "I don't think you're quite up to that yet, but when you are..."

"Oh, yeah," Greg whispered, "Definitely."

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The restaurant was spectacular, and they were ushered into a private room immediately. The lighting was low and really rather romantic -- a thing he'd never have associated with a man like Mycroft Holmes. Subtle, certainly. Dangerous, even. Romantic, however, was entire solar systems away from his concept of the man. The time Greg had been spending with him recently had opened his eyes. It was a fascinating revelation.

They'd met years ago, shortly after Greg met Sherlock. At first he'd thought Mycroft nothing more than a powerful, prissy bureaucrat: cold, aloof, entirely too posh to believe, and extremely distant. As he watched the brothers over the years, he'd begun to see that Mycroft had a lot of layers to him. He would no doubt deny that he cared about anyone but, while they both struggled to get Sherlock off the drugs, it became increasingly apparent that Mycroft's coldness and distance were less innate and more intended to keep the pain to a minimum. He'd become encrusted with it, like coral growing over a shipwreck.

That was what Mycroft was like -- coral. Sharp and cutting sometimes, cold and hard. Elegant. Intricate. Yet Greg knew that something more human lay beneath the mask he presented to the world. It wasn't easy to find ways to see it; Mycroft guarded himself very carefully. Greg wasn't entirely sure how he'd slipped inside the man's defenses.

It had taken a few years to warm up to him at all, but Greg had grown to like him much as he'd grown to like Sherlock. Mycroft's brilliance was far more understated than Sherlock's could ever hope to be, but he suspected Mycroft might well be the smarter of the two. They both loved dramatic gestures, but those moments were always framed very differently. Attraction had come later still, but he'd been married and not particularly inclined toward infidelity; he'd never thought Mycroft would
want him anyway, not really. Greg hadn't believed he was the sort Mycroft would fancy, after all. Much too working class for someone like that.

"What are you thinking about?" Mycroft asked, taking a sip of his wine.

Greg shrugged. "How we got here, I guess. Where we might go."

"Where we might go is largely up to you, Greg, though I will admit to a marked preference for something closer and more intimate."

"You don't hear me objecting," Greg said, smiling. His smile faded after a moment. "Why, though? I mean, why me? It's not like you couldn't have pretty much anyone you wanted. Money and power tend to do that, and you looking amazing in those suits doesn't hurt, either."

Mycroft raised an eyebrow at him. "I'm not interested in people who are interested in me for either my money or my power. I am, after all, only a minor government official. There's not much power to be had in such a position."

Greg snorted. "That's such bollocks. I've known better than that since the beginning."

"Well, yes, but most people don't," Mycroft said, looking down for a moment at his hands. He took a bite of his dinner and looked back up at Greg. "I've been interested in you for much longer than you realize, Greg, but I didn't want to interfere in your life any more than was absolutely necessary to try and keep Sherlock safe." Greg nodded and gestured for him to continue. "Sherlock accords you a great deal of respect, of course. Not that he would ever admit it. He has very little interest in anyone he regards as 'ordinary.' That was enough to intrigue me on its own. But it was..." Mycroft hesitated for a moment, almost seeming embarrassed. "It was your warmth that appealed to me. You're an exceedingly handsome man, Greg, but the fact that you care about Sherlock, despite how awful he is to you so often -- it's made such a difference in his life. And in mine."

"People are supposed to care about each other, Mycroft. That's how it works."

Mycroft shook his head. "No. You astonish me, Greg. Your work constantly exposes you to the worst that humanity has to offer, yet you are still capable of such compassion. I've never quite understood that. Caring... makes people vulnerable. It's a liability."

"No." Greg shook his head emphatically, but that made it spin just a little from the wine and the remnants of the pain meds he'd taken several hours earlier. He had to take a breath to make it stop. "No, it isn't. Compassion is what makes us human, Mycroft. It's what makes us strong enough to carry on, even in the face of horrible things like murder and terror and genocide. And don't try to tell me you and Sherlock haven't any, either. I've seen you both, I know what you do -- or what he does, anyway. I have some guesses at what you do, and if you hadn't any, you'd both be like that nutcase, Moriarty. Your brother wouldn't be out there solving crimes, he'd be committing them, just for fun. Just to watch the world burn."

"And you... Mycroft, I might think your morals are a little questionable sometimes, and I really resented that Baskerville business, but I know you spend a lot of your time trying to prevent the worst from happening. I can see it in the way you look sometimes when you get home from work, how it all weighs on you. If you didn't care, if you hadn't any compassion in you, it wouldn't bother you at all. You'd have left Sherlock to die in a gutter years ago. And you wouldn't be treating me like this." He reached across the small table and took Mycroft's hand. "I know you care. About Sherlock. About me. About Britain. About far more than you will ever let on."

Mycroft looked at him for a few moments, his fingers tight around Greg's hand. His tongue moved
over his lips in a nervous flicker. "You are so much more perceptive than Sherlock has ever wanted to admit," he whispered. There was a slight tremor in his voice and it shocked Greg to hear it. "And you are so much better than I deserve."

"None of that," Greg insisted. "Do you think Sherlock doesn't deserve a friend like John?"

"A ludicrous concept."

"So's what you just said." He released Mycroft's hand and had a few bites. Mycroft remained silent, just watching him. "This is good, Mycroft." He pointed at his plate with his fork. "Don't let it get cold, yeah?" Greg smiled at him, feeling just the slightest bit of mischief creeping about inside him.

"You really are devastating. You know that, don't you?"

If Greg's face hadn't already been a patchwork of disturbing colours, he was sure he'd have blushed. "Not like this, I'm not."

"Even like this."

"Keep that up and I'll start to think you want something from me."

Mycroft gave him a smouldering look. "Oh, but I do."

Greg laughed. "Good." He was more than a little pleased to hear it.

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"I'm going to be out of the country for a while," Mycroft told him, a few days later.

"For how long?" Greg asked.

"I'm not certain."

Greg had told him to be careful and hugged him before he left. Mycroft looked like he really didn't want to go.

It was nearly a week before he returned. Greg found Mycroft in the library, leaning over an antique writing desk, his shoulders slumped as he stared out the window into the late afternoon drizzle. "Mycroft?" Greg slipped his arms around Mycroft, holding him, and Mycroft straightened and leaned back into Greg's embrace with a quiet, tired sigh. "Janie's got something on in the kitchen. She said you'd be home soon, but I didn't know you were already here."

"Anthea must have called her."

Greg rested his chin on Mycroft's shoulder, pressing his cheek against Mycroft's. Mycroft folded his arms over Greg's and held them to his chest. "How long ago did you get home?"

"Not long," Mycroft said. "Ten minutes, maybe. Fifteen."

"Did you want to be alone for a while?" Greg hoped he wasn't disturbing the man, but he rather doubted it.

"No." Mycroft shook his head. "I really don't."

"You all right? You look knackered."
"I am."

Greg tilted his head and pressed a kiss to Mycroft's neck. Under the lingering scent of his cologne, Greg could smell exhaustion and the sour remnants of fear. "Do you want to come sit at the table? I don't think it'll be long before tea's ready."

"No," Mycroft whispered. "I'd rather be here for a few moments." His fingers tightened on Greg's arms.

"All right." Greg just held him, letting the fingers of one hand caress Mycroft's side. He could feel tiny tremors in Mycroft's muscles; the man was probably dead on his feet. They stood there like that until Mycroft's butler (he had a housekeeper and a butler, and how did people even do that anymore?) tapped on the door and told them tea was ready. "Come on," Greg murmured. "Come sit before you fall over." He released Mycroft and took his hand.

Mycroft sighed and nodded. "Right." They walked to the dining room and sat together for a while, though Mycroft barely picked at his food.

"Mycroft, is there anything about this that you can talk about, or that you want to?"

"I can't. I'm sorry." Mycroft stared at his teacup for a moment; it trembled slightly in his hand.

"I thought as much," Greg said, "but I wanted to ask anyway."

"Thank you."

Eventually, Greg couldn't stand to watch it anymore. Mycroft had at least eaten something, even if it wasn't enough, but he could tell Mycroft was done in. "Here." He stood up, "I know it's early, but you need some sleep. It's bed for you." He stood and took Mycroft's hand. Mycroft looked up at him for a moment, vaguely puzzled, but rose and followed Greg without comment. Mycroft's room was down the hall from the one he'd been given, and Greg led him there, opening the door into the huge bedroom. "Sit down, yeah?" He flicked on the light and shut the door behind them. Mycroft sank slowly onto the bed, his hands resting on the mattress beside him, and hunched forward a little, obviously miserable. "Hot shower might help, if you want one." Mycroft nodded. "Right then. I'll start the water for you. You think you can manage getting undressed yourself?"

"Yes, thank you."

Greg started the shower and got it to a temperature that seemed appropriate. He liked it fairly hot but wasn't sure what Mycroft preferred. It was a place to start, anyway. Mycroft could adjust it when he got in. When Greg went back into the bedroom, Mycroft was tying the belt of his dressing gown around his waist.

"Would you wait for me here?" Mycroft asked.

"Sure." Greg sat on one of the plushly upholstered chairs and leaned back as Mycroft disappeared into the bath. He was gone for only about five minutes, but he looked considerably better when he returned. His exhaustion was still evident, but the stress lines creasing his forehead and his eyes had eased. Silently, Mycroft pulled a pair of dark blue pyjama bottoms from his drawer and slipped them on.

He paused and looked over at Greg, then held a hand out to him. "Thank you. I really did need that. I likely wouldn't have if you hadn't suggested it." Greg stood and took his hand, pulling Mycroft close and wrapping his arms about him. "Would... would you stay with me tonight, Greg?"
Greg hesitated for a moment before he answered. "I don't think my ribs are up to staying with you all night, but I could stay until you fall asleep. Would that be okay?"

Mycroft nodded, chin pressing into his shoulder. "More than adequate, I think. I wouldn't want to hurt you if I rolled over and ended up with an elbow in your ribs."

"Yeah, that's what I was worried about." Greg caressed the long arc of Mycroft's throat with a kiss. "If I felt better..."

"It's all right." Mycroft untangled himself from their embrace and removed his robe, dropping it at the foot of the bed. Greg hadn't seen him half-dressed before. He'd had a vague thought that maybe Mycroft was never undressed, but he did like what he saw. Tall and relatively thin, despite Sherlock's jabs about his weight, he looked good. Greg reached out and touched Mycroft's chest, running his fingers through the dark hair there. Mycroft shivered slightly, the heaviness in his eyes lightening as he began to relax.

Knowing he wasn't going to be there all night, Greg didn't bother worrying about pyjamas. He stripped down to his underthings, turned out the light, and slipped into the bed next to Mycroft so that the worst of his broken bones were away from him.

Greg lay back and offered Mycroft an arm. "Come here." Mycroft's mouth twitched into a thin, tired smile and he lay on his side, resting his head on Greg's shoulder. He draped an arm over Greg's chest as Greg wrapped an arm around him. After a moment's rearrangement, with one leg slipping between Greg's, he settled, sighing.

"Thank you, Greg," Mycroft whispered.

"It's all right," Greg replied. "I've missed this kind of thing a lot. Holding someone like this." He stared up at the high ceiling, dim in the evening dusk as the light faded through Mycroft's large bedroom windows. "Karen, well... she didn't want me to anymore. Hadn't for years, really."

Mycroft nodded. His thumb moved slowly back and forth at Greg's hip. "I understand." He kissed Greg's chest. "I've... I've been alone for a very long time. I can't properly express what this means to me."

Greg hadn't known Mycroft to be involved with anyone since they'd met. "Is it okay for me to ask how long?"

"Nearly twenty years." Mycroft's fingers tightened on Greg's hip.

"That's... I'm sorry. That's a long time to be alone." He nuzzled Mycroft's hair.

Mycroft nodded. "For years, I believed that it didn't affect me. I had a goal, a place that I wanted to create for myself, and I thought that relationships would only serve to hold me back. I thought those emotions a liability, and I found a great deal of satisfaction in my work. I am still satisfied with the work, don't mistake me." He paused for a moment and Greg just waited. "I've never been very good at relationships, I'm afraid. You've seen how Sherlock and I get on."

"You're talking to the guy whose thirteen year marriage just went tits up, Mycroft. It doesn't mean we can't try."

"I know. It's just, since I met you, the solitude I've lived in has felt oppressive. When you were hurt..." Mycroft's voice trailed off, shaky.

"Hey, hush, it's all right. I'm all right." Greg wiggled his way, slightly painfully, down the bed so he
was nose to nose with Mycroft. "Here," he whispered, pulling Mycroft into a slow, soft kiss, holding him close. Mycroft responded with a small, wounded sound, rolling onto his back and taking Greg with him. The kiss lasted for several minutes, growing intense but not sexual, until Mycroft came up for air.

"I wish I wasn't so tired," he said, looking up into Greg's eyes.

"I wish my ribs didn't hurt so much." He smiled. "You need to sleep. Really."

"I know, I know."

Greg moved off Mycroft's body. "Roll over, okay?"

Mycroft gave him a curious look but complied, his arms crossed around his pillow as he rested his head on it. Greg started rubbing Mycroft's back slowly with one hand while he lay on his side, his head propped on his other arm. It took about two minutes for Mycroft to drop off entirely. Greg kept his hand moving for another ten minutes or so, to make sure Mycroft wouldn't wake when he got up, then kissed the man's cheek and rose to get dressed.

His own bed was much lonelier that night.

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Mycroft was still at home when Greg got up the next day, reading a newspaper in his sitting room. "I thought you'd be gone already?" Greg said.

"I have the next two days off. My week was... stressful."

"Yeah, I could tell." Mycroft set his paper down and stood, greeting Greg with a hug. "I need some coffee. Join me in the kitchen?"

Mycroft nodded. "Of course."

They were quiet while Greg drank his coffee and had a little breakfast, letting himself wake slowly. He was finally at a point where his background level of pain was tolerable enough that he could do everything for himself again without risking reinjury. The two of them watched one another over the table, and the expression on Mycroft's face was soft and fond. Greg smiled back at him.

Once he was done with his breakfast, Greg stood. "Want to sit out in the garden for a bit?" The weather was cool, a bit rainy, but there was shelter out there and Greg was in the mood for some fresh air.

"That sounds pleasant," Mycroft agreed. They joined hands and made their way outside at a leisurely pace under Mycroft's ubiquitous umbrella, eventually sitting together on a bench in the small gazebo at the center of the garden. Greg leaned into Mycroft, who slid an arm around his shoulders.

They talked a little about the day's news, and what Greg had heard from John about Sherlock while Mycroft had been away. It was relaxed and comfortable; Greg enjoyed the feeling of closeness they'd developed in the time he'd been at Mycroft's home, and the warmth of being under Mycroft's arm.

"I've been doing a lot better in the past few days," Greg said. "I think it's time for me to go back to my place. Tomorrow?" He looked into Mycroft's eyes. There was a shadow of sorrow there.

"I don't suppose I could persuade you to stay with me? Live here with me?" He didn't look hopeful.
Greg sighed and shook his head. "Thank you for asking, Mycroft. I'm just not quite ready for that, yet. I like this -- what we have, where we're going -- but that's a really big commitment, and I've only been divorced for a few months. My going home again doesn't mean I don't want to see you, or that I don't want to come back and stay for the night when the ribs won't object. I'd love to have you come to mine now and then, if you'd be all right with that, too. You understand, don't you?"

"Yes. I did rather expect that would be your answer. Still, I wanted to ask. And yes, I do think I'd like to come and stay with you soon." The expression on his face was a mix of disappointment and hope.

Greg held Mycroft's face between his hands and kissed him. "Good. I'm glad to hear it. I wasn't sure you'd... well, my place isn't much compared to this." It was decent enough; a big one bedroom not that far from work, and it hadn't taken him all that long to unpack his things. It felt a little empty sometimes, but he'd been trying to make it feel like a home. It wasn't a place he was ashamed to ask someone in to visit. Mycroft, though -- his standards were a bit different. A lot different.

"You'll be there, Greg. That's really all that matters to me at the moment." Greg grinned at him and kissed him again. Kissing Mycroft was comfortable, an expression of their affection for one another and an affirmation of their connection. It made Greg happy. They tangled their arms around one another, carefully in deference to Greg's still-aching ribs, their lips exploring one another's mouths, their cheeks, the curve of ears and the soft skin of a throat. It was love he was feeling; there was love in the way he touched Mycroft, in the way Mycroft touched him, in how they held one another with such tenderness after all that had happened.

Mycroft's low voice in his ear, lips tickling at his skin, sent tingles down Greg's spine. "Shall we take this inside?" Greg shivered.

"God, yes," he whispered.

"I know you still hurt." Mycroft's fingers combed through his hair in a caress that left Greg a little weak in the knees. "I'll be very careful."

"Yeah, sounds good." Greg was breathless at the thought. This was as far as they'd ever got physically, at this point mostly because of Greg's injuries. It was well past time to take it further. They rose together, still sharing kisses that felt almost shy. Their walk back to the house was slow, arms still about one another, sheltered under Mycroft's umbrella in the rain as Greg let his head rest on Mycroft's shoulder.

Mycroft led Greg to his room, closing the door behind them and pulling Greg to him in a careful but passionate embrace. They kissed over and over until Greg was dizzy from the slip of Mycroft's tongue against his own, their hands moving slowly, plucking at buttons, tugging at shirts and trousers, at Mycroft's tie. Greg's head tilted back as Mycroft kissed and licked and nibbled his way down Greg's throat and across his chest; Greg's breath was quick and heated as Mycroft sucked at one nipple.

With a quiet groan, Greg sank down onto the bed, pulling Mycroft with him. He lay back as Mycroft pulled Greg's shoes and then his trousers off, dropping them unceremoniously next to the bed. Greg pushed Mycroft's shirt back over his shoulders, letting his hands move over his lover's exposed skin as Mycroft crawled up over him on the bed and leaned down to kiss him. Moving together, they undressed one another, eager and wanting.

There were awkward moments, Greg's ribs creaking and making him hiss as they got themselves down to skin, but that first moment when their nude bodies came together along their entire length, legs tangling, chests and bellies and hips meeting, was worth the aches. Mycroft, his eyes half open,
looked nearly undone already but Greg knew it had been years since he'd had anything like this. He ran one hand down Mycroft's side and over the firm muscle of what had turned out to be an absolutely incredible arse. Greg's fingers squeezed, pulling Mycroft's hips closer, their cocks rubbing against each other, and Mycroft moaned, eyes closed, his face opening in utter pleasure. Greg smiled and laughed breathlessly before he devoured Mycroft's mouth in a possessive kiss.

"Greg." His name was a gasp on Mycroft's lips when he drew back to take a breath. "Oh, Greg."

"You feel fantastic." Greg's mouth closed over Mycroft's clavicle and he sucked gently, letting the edge of his teeth run across the soft, thin skin there. Mycroft shivered and pressed his hips into Greg's body as Greg wrapped one leg around Mycroft's hip and pulled him in. The heat of Mycroft's hard cock was delicious and he gave Mycroft a wild, hard kiss that left both of them panting. "Up here." He patted Mycroft's hip and Mycroft slid up his body as Greg drew him closer, the damp tip of Mycroft's cock dragging along his skin. He took Mycroft's length in hand and twisted his waist a little, trying to avoid hurting his ribs; he brought Mycroft's cock to his lips and licked at the tip of it.

The sound Mycroft made was desperate and he pressed into Greg's willing mouth. Greg sucked, stroking Mycroft's shaft as he teased with his tongue. "Greg, wait, wait." Mycroft was gasping and pulled away, though Greg didn't let go of him. "One moment, let me--" With an awkward motion, Mycroft turned on the bed so that his own head was at Greg's hip. He wrapped an arm around Greg's hips and pulled him close, sucking Greg's cock into his mouth and sinking down onto it until he'd taken most of it in.

Greg's eyes rolled back in his head and he gasped. Mycroft's mouth was incredible -- hot and wet and slippery, and his tongue caressed him with glorious enthusiasm. It may have been years since the man had been with anyone, but he must have been mind-blowing when he was at the top of his form, because this? This was amazing. "Yeah, oh god, love, yeah." He couldn't do anything but lie there and let Mycroft have his way with him for a few moments.

When Greg's brain stopped jellifying, he turned his attention to Mycroft's cock, moaning as he slipped his mouth down Mycroft's shaft; Mycroft groaned in response, shivering slightly, and it only served to curl Greg's toes with pleasure. He turned onto his side, wrapping both arms around Mycroft's hips, Mycroft echoing the motion, and they held one another desperately, their hips thrusting slowly as they sucked one another.

He'd not been with another man himself since before he'd married Karen. Greg hadn't realized how much he'd missed this -- the taste of another man's cock, that smooth skin against his tongue, the rough brush of body hair against his skin, the musk of another man's arousal. The quiet sounds he and Mycroft were making as they licked and touched and explored surrounded him and Greg closed his eyes and sank into the pure sensation of it all.

Too soon, Mycroft's shuddering release was wrung from him, hard and slow, hips rocking, come flooding Greg's mouth and spilling out from between his lips as he swallowed. Mycroft's soft cries were intense as his fingers dug into Greg's hip and thigh with bruising force.

It took a few moments for Mycroft to catch his breath again but Greg let him slip from his mouth, knowing he'd be too sensitive for more just then. When Mycroft licked Greg's cock again, his tongue was chilled and a little dry, but it only took a moment for things to warm up. Greg lay back, just enjoying Mycroft's mouth and the caress of his hands along his thighs, his hips, his sides. Even though Mycroft had just come, Greg could feel how much he was enjoying this. Greg let his hand slip down Mycroft's back and ran his fingers into his lover's hair, feeling the rhythm of Mycroft's movement; it stole his breath and left him shimmering inside his skin.

Greg whispered to him, words of love and desire tumbling from his mouth as Mycroft sucked him,
his lover's fingers caressing his balls and playing at the base of his shaft. Mycroft's fingernails trailed along Greg's thigh, raising gooseflesh and making him shiver; it sent a jolt of pleasure through him, taking him to the edge. "Oh, god, yeah. Please, Mycroft." He wanted to come so much, wanted to feel his body dissolve into bliss, and Mycroft groaned around Greg's cock as Greg's fingers tightened in his hair. The vibration of it was all Greg needed to drop from the edge into the abyss, not caring that his shaking body ached as his ribs contracted and his back arched.

Mycroft held him through the shuddering aftermath, then rolled his body so that they were once again face to face, taking Greg into his arms and holding him close. They lay together, boneless, just breathing in the sharp scent of their come on the sheets and their skin, sweating and panting. Greg's eyes were closed as he rested his head against Mycroft's neck, his nose buried in the angle of his lover's neck, warm and damp and salty.

"I love you," Greg whispered, exhausted.

Mycroft's fingers traced along Greg's chin and he raised his head. Greg gazed up at Mycroft, who looked overcome by his words and on the verge of tears. He gave Greg a slightly shaky smile. "I love you, as well, Greg." He shook his head gently. "You have no idea how much."

Greg grinned at him and pulled him down into a slow, deep kiss. It felt so very right.

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Sherlock's death several months later was a horrifying shock, and the days surrounding it were a cascade of things gone disastrously wrong. By the time Greg attended the funeral, he'd been suspended without pay until an investigation could be completed on all the cases where Sherlock had acted as a consultant. It would be months. A year or more, maybe. He had no idea how long.

He was reeling and devastated as he sat with Mycroft for the service, nearly numb with it. Greg held Mycroft's hand, their fingers twined tightly together, and Mycroft's hand was painfully cold. Mycroft and Sherlock's mum was there and they'd exchanged a few polite words, but Greg hardly felt able to be in her presence, given how he blamed himself for what had happened. It was the last way he'd ever have wanted to meet her. Next to the last -- the last way didn't bear contemplating.

Mycroft was pale and silent, his face a motionless mask that Greg knew had to be concealing his own grief. Despite Sherlock's attitude, Greg knew that Mycroft had loved him, had tried hard to protect him, even when Sherlock wanted nothing to do with him. He wasn't surprised that Mycroft was trying to show nothing. There was pain in his eyes, though, and Greg could see it clearly.

John wouldn't speak to him -- to either of them -- wouldn't even look at them, and Mrs Hudson was a sobbing wreck. Greg's own team at work had tried to distance themselves from him as the disaster unfolded, and he had never felt so alone in his life. It seemed the only person in the world who was willing to have him around right now was Mycroft. He was grateful, even as Greg worried about his lover.

After the funeral, Mycroft asked if he could go back to Greg's with him. "Yeah, of course you can," Greg told him. He hoped this wasn't the prelude to Mycroft deciding to leave him. Greg didn't think he could take that right now, on top of everything else. Mycroft's driver dropped them off. Mycroft told him he'd call when he needed him.

Greg made tea for them while Mycroft sat on his couch. As he pressed the warm mug into Mycroft's hands, he tried to speak. "I'm sorry, Mycroft. I'm so sorry." His voice shook. "I should never have let it happen."
Mycroft shook his head. "No, Greg. There is no conceivable way that this could be your fault."
Mycroft's voice was much steadier, even and measured. "You risked your career to warn him. You
gave him every opportunity to turn the events of that day. I can't accept you blaming yourself. If
anyone is to blame here, it would be me. I'm the one who gave Moriarty the information he used to
drive Sherlock to this."

"But why, Mycroft? Why would Sherlock do it?" Slow tears filled Greg's eyes again. He took a sip
of his tea, trying to conceal them, but he couldn't hide his quiet sniffle when he swallowed. "He had
to know we'd do everything we could to help him. Anyone who actually looked at the evidence
would know he wasn't a fraud."

"Sherlock has always had his own reasons." Mycroft took both cups and set them on Greg's coffee
table, pulling Greg down onto the couch and taking him in his arms. Greg held on desperately and
wept, the shock and grief and anger pouring out of him as Mycroft held him, rocking him. Mycroft's
face buried in his hair. "Please, Greg, please," he whispered, "it's not your fault. Moriarty drove him
to this. You know he was trying to destroy my brother. He did this, not you, and... and I helped
him."

"You told me why, Mycroft, what Moriarty was dangling in front of you. How could you have made
another choice, with a possibility like that hanging over everyone's heads?"

They'd both made mistakes, but it did nothing to assuage Greg's guilt. It felt like a riptide, dragging
him under, suffocating him. There were too many things falling apart in his life, and he was
overwhelmed. Sherlock was dead and John obviously laid the blame at his feet. His career was sunk.
He was likely to lose his flat.

He pulled a handkerchief from his pocket and tried to scrub the tears from his face, wiped his nose.
Sniffled. He blinked back the new tears threatening to fall. "I don't know what I'm going to do,"
Greg whispered. "They've suspended me and I don't have enough right now to keep my flat for more
than another month or so." He shook his head. "I've not had to worry about where the rent's coming
from in more than twenty years. No idea if they're ever going to have me back. I know the cases
were good, Mycroft. I know Sherlock wasn't--"

"Greg." Mycroft cupped Greg's cheek in his hand. "I can't do anything about your suspension, I'm
sorry. The fact that I'm Sherlock's brother would, by itself, be enough to create even more trouble for
you if my interference were discovered. We both know they'll eventually find the cases valid; the
convictions will be upheld. It's inevitable but it will take months, I know. But I... I can still help, if
you'll let me." Greg sniffed again, waiting for Mycroft to speak, trying to control his breathing so the

"After what I did?" It seemed an impossible offer. His guilt pounded at him, heavy as lead chains.

"You tried to save him, Greg. You did everything you could. I understand having to work within
constraints that act against the people I care about, and I know there was nothing else you could have
done. You had your duty and you pushed the limits of it as far as you could in Sherlock's favor; I can
only respect that; it was precisely what I had to do and my actions were arguably much more harmful
to him. Listen to me, I do not blame you." He kissed Greg once, a soft brush of lips against Greg's.
"Please. I love you, Greg. Come live with me. You know I've asked before. You know I want you
with me."

Greg burrowed back into Mycroft's embrace, nodding. When he spoke, his voice was ragged. "I love
you, too, Mycroft. So much. Yeah. Yeah, I will." He could feel Mycroft's relieved sigh and the
kisses he pressed into Greg's hair.
"Thank you, Greg. I've wanted... I'm glad you'll finally come home with me." He drew away, looking into Greg's eyes, carding his fingers through Greg's hair. "Come tonight? Now?" Greg looked around, wondering what he was going to do with his things. "You have some clothing at home. We can deal with your flat later, when we're both feeling better. I'll have my people come and deal with it if you like, but come home with me tonight."

"Okay." He nodded again. "Call your car back, then."

They sat on the couch and held each other until Mycroft's driver arrived. The journey back to Mycroft's -- back home -- was a blur, but it settled something in Greg's chest and the decision eased some small measure of his pain. Mycroft seemed calmer as well, as though he'd had a weight taken from his shoulders. The fact that Mycroft didn't hold him responsible had helped, but Greg didn't know if John would ever speak to him again. That was its own variety of hell and it wasn't going to stop hurting for a long time.

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The inquiries had taken three months -- a far shorter period than Greg had anticipated. He had to wonder whether Mycroft had a hand in the speed of the whole thing, but he knew no one had interfered in the inquiries themselves. The cases had been good, he'd known that all along. Still, the entire process had been harrowing and he'd spent far more time in front of the investigating commission than he cared to. Insomnia had been a constant, miserable companion the whole time.

The stress had been awful and sometimes he'd felt nothing but a hideous depression that left him utterly drained. Even with that, he'd fought, because it wasn't just his reputation at stake, it was Sherlock's. There was no way he was going to let the public believe Sherlock had been a fraud, or that Greg hadn't worked his arse off to solve those cases.

His first day back at work was, to say the least, awkward. It wasn't anything he'd ever want to repeat, that was certain. The suspicious sidelong glances and the gossip among his co-workers would take weeks to subside despite the fact he'd been entirely exonerated. Sherlock's reputation had been restored along with his own, but he didn't expect either of them would be getting any apologies.

That entire first day was spent doing paperwork and getting his office back together. He wasn't yet certain if his team would be brought back together, given the animosity of Donovan and Anderson in accusing Sherlock of actually committing most of the crimes he'd consulted on. Greg wasn't sure he could work with them again, even if they were. It would take him at least a week to get everything in order and start doing actual police work again.

At least they were paying him for the time he'd been suspended. Living with Mycroft meant he hadn't needed to worry about a roof over him; they'd settled in well together, though Mycroft tended to be much quieter and more withdrawn than he was before Sherlock's death. It worried Greg, but he tried to be there for Mycroft as much as he could, even as he dealt with his own grief over Sherlock's suicide.

They took care of each other, he and Mycroft. Greg knew he'd needed Mycroft a lot in the last few months. The man's emotional stability had been astonishing, even after his loss. Mycroft helped Greg hold his life together while he dealt with the inquest; Greg kept Mycroft from working himself to death. He'd not been able to contribute much of value to their household, but he could be there for his lover, someone to talk to when Mycroft needed it, or to hold him in the night, when he was having disturbing dreams. There had been a lot of them, and Mycroft was running on the aching edge of exhaustion.

When Greg went to bed that night he finally slept all the way through, with Mycroft's arm a
comforting weight around his waist.

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"Is something wrong, Greg?" Mycroft looked up from the file he'd been reading as Greg entered their library.

"He's alive, isn't he?" Greg was convinced of it, unsure if he should be angry or relieved about the whole thing.

Mycroft just raised an eyebrow. "Greg?"

"Sherlock. Is alive."

"Close the door." Mycroft put the file down on the table next to his chair as Greg closed the door behind him. "Please, come and sit with me." The uneasiness in his face was all Greg needed for confirmation. His only question now was, would Mycroft lie to him about it?

"So I'm right." Greg just stood there, arms crossed over his chest. "That text you got this afternoon, the one that bothered you so much, that was from him, wasn't it?" Mycroft looked at him, obviously trying to decide what to say. After living with him for several months, Greg had got much better at reading him. Mycroft had most of the world convinced that he had no emotions; Greg, being his lover, knew better, knew how much Mycroft concealed. "Contrary to Sherlock's opinion, they didn't make me a Detective Inspector because he solved all my cases, Mycroft. Tell me."

"Yes." Mycroft folded his hands in his lap and looked down at them for a moment.

"And Moriarty?" Greg hoped that bastard hadn't got away well.

"Dead. After Sherlock jumped. He shot himself." Mycroft raised his eyes again, watching him, looking at Greg like Mycroft thought he might explode. "I'd have gladly shot him myself if he hadn't," Mycroft added, murmuring.

"Who else knew about all this?" Quiet anger and an uncomfortable twist of betrayal roiled in Greg's gut. "Anyone?"

"Miss Hooper, in the mortuary at Saint Bartholomew's."

"Molly knew?" The anger flared, tightening his chest. Greg's fingers clenched into fists at his sides. "And you couldn't tell me?" His voice rose, louder with his rising emotion.

"No, Greg. I couldn't." There was an apology in Mycroft's tone, if not in his words.

"Why not?" Greg snapped. "Why trust her and not me? After everything I did for him? After all I've had to deal with to get my job back, all the grief I felt when I thought he was dead, you couldn't tell me what was going on?" He was pacing now, back and forth in a tight oval in front of Mycroft's chair. "I thought you loved me, Mycroft -- I thought you trusted me!" Greg shouted. "Why didn't you tell me, damn it? Why did you lie to me?"

Mycroft bolted to his feet and caught Greg by the wrist as he swept by, his grip fierce. "Because I was afraid for your life," he shouted back, fury in his eyes. The sudden, restrained violence of it stopped Greg. Mycroft rarely raised his voice -- for him to shout was a shock.

The shout and the sudden hand on his wrist stopped his pacing. "What do you mean, you were afraid for my life?"
Mycroft took a deep breath and let it out slowly. "Please, Greg, come sit with me and let me explain. I need you to understand why things had to be this way." He pulled gently at Greg's arm, his grip loosening slightly. Greg sat in his own chair, close to Mycroft's, and Mycroft sat as well, not letting go of him.

"When Sherlock was on the roof of the hospital, Moriarty told him that he had three gunmen in place to kill the people he cared about, Sherlock's only friends. There were snipers following John and Mrs Hudson." Mycroft swallowed uneasily. "And there was a plant at Scotland Yard, waiting to kill you if the command came. When I asked you to come live with me after the funeral, it was because I wanted you to be with me, but it was also because you were much safer here, with all the security on the house. I had to be sure you would be difficult to touch. I hope you don't... you don't regret coming."

"Were you ever going to tell me?" Greg asked, still angry and resentful but calmer now, given what he was hearing.

Mycroft nodded. "Yes."

"When?" Greg couldn't help the suspicion in his voice.

"Next month, actually." There was worry in Mycroft's eyes now. Greg's head tilted in his confusion. "Sherlock felt that most of the danger to you would have passed by then."

Greg frowned, trying to process everything Mycroft was saying. "Why wasn't Moriarty threatening you, as well, then?"

"Moriarty was well aware of Sherlock's animosity toward me. Threatening me would have gained him nothing, certainly not enough leverage to cause Sherlock any willingness to die on my behalf." There was a rough bitterness in Mycroft's voice as he let go of Greg's wrist, reaching up to brush a gentle touch of his fingertips on Greg's cheek. "You, on the other hand, are very important to Sherlock. And to me."

"But..."

"Greg, I couldn't risk your life any more than Sherlock could -- less, because of what you are to me. Neither of us were willing to watch you die, or John, or Mrs Hudson." He could hear how badly Mycroft wanted him to understand, to forgive the deception.

"But that doesn't mean you couldn't tell us after he'd... disappeared. I don't understand why you'd let me grieve like that when I didn't have to. You've seen what it's done to John. He hasn't been able to let go of any of it."

Mycroft's thumb traced the line of Greg's cheekbone and he slowly threaded his fingers into the hair at Greg's temple. "At least one of the assassins is still out there, Greg. If any of you hadn't been utterly convincing in your grief, if you'd shown any hint you knew my brother was alive, you would have given him away, and you'd have been killed as well. If Moriarty's men believed for an instant that you knew, they would have used your death to draw him back out. Sherlock has been slowly uprooting and destroying what's left of Moriarty's criminal empire; it has been extremely dangerous for him. I've heard from him only rarely. Today he had to ask me for funds to maintain his cover. One of Moriarty's assassins is close on his trail even as we speak. He's nearly been killed at least four times that I'm aware of. He is constantly in peril."

Greg raised a hand and covered Mycroft's, suddenly realizing how much of a burden Mycroft had been carrying, alone, the entire time. "I am not able to contact him at will, Greg, and I have spent
every day not knowing if he will survive this. Every day I worry that I will receive a report that he really is dead."

"Then why were you planning on telling me at all? And are you going to tell John? He bloody well deserves to know Sherlock's still alive."

"Sherlock believed that six months would be sufficient time for you to recover and be able to conceal the information without endangering yourself or him. I do not intend to inform John." Mycroft's eyes were tight and tense, and Greg could see he was expecting an argument.

"Why not? What's the difference? You were willing to tell me."

Mycroft looked away for a moment, his fingers tightening in Greg's hair. With a slight sigh, he said, "The difference is that if John knows Sherlock is alive, he'll try to find him. You know he won't be able to sit idly by with Sherlock in danger, but if he goes looking he's only going to get both of them killed, and perhaps you as well. John may have been a soldier, but he has never been an intelligence operative. He hasn't any idea how to go about finding Sherlock, or helping him, without putting all four of you at risk again."

Mycroft leaned toward Greg slightly, guiding Greg to do the same, and rested his forehead against Greg's. "I refuse to jeopardize your life on the chance that John would be able to control his desire to help Sherlock. Please, Greg, please understand."

Greg sighed. He tilted his face to press a kiss to Mycroft's forehead then leaned back again. "But why Molly?"

"We needed someone inside the hospital to certify Sherlock's death."

"So she's known all along," Mycroft just looked at him, one eyebrow raised. It was uncannily like Sherlock's 'you moron' look. "Right, of course she'd have to."

"Moriarty had seen how Sherlock treated her. He didn't believe Miss Hooper was any more leverage against Sherlock than I. He certainly didn't believe she could be of any use to him. We're lucky he was blinded by his madness. He'd have been much more difficult to stop, had he seen things as they are."

Greg nodded. "Right, then."

"I hope you'll forgive me, Greg. I wished I could tell you; I hated seeing how not knowing was hurting you. If it had been my life threatened--"

"Yeah. I would probably have made the same decision, Mycroft. Sometimes... sometimes the only choice we can make isn't whether or not to hurt someone, but how much we're going to have to hurt them. It's an awful feeling."

The relief in Mycroft's eyes was painful. "I thought, when you found out, you would leave me."

"I wouldn't, love. I don't like what happened, but I understand why it had to be done this way. And you're right. I'm not sure I could have fooled anyone if I'd known Sherlock was still alive in those first few weeks." Greg got up and took Mycroft's hands, pulling him to his feet and into a tight embrace, both of them silent for a long time. Finally, whispering, Greg said, "If there's anything I can do to help, tell me. I'll do whatever you need. Whatever you need."

"You're what I need, Greg," Mycroft answered, his voice quiet but intense. "You always have been. None of this has been easy, but you've made it bearable. The fact you're still here..."
"I won't leave you," Greg promised.

Mycroft looked into Greg's eyes, assessing, then kissed him. It was hard and desperate, filled with need and relief and hope. Greg opened to it entirely, letting Mycroft's long-restrained passion carry him into a breathless place, wanting to give his lover everything. It was easy enough to do, and he was glad that Mycroft had finally let go of the secret that had been making him miserable, digging into his sleep and haunting him.

Greg didn't pay any real attention to how they got to their bedroom, or where the clothes went. All that really mattered was that they were lying on the bed, skin to skin, moving together, touching each other. He wanted Mycroft like he wanted to breathe, wanted to feel him come apart, feel him inside his body. "Here," Greg said, panting. He rolled over. "Like this."

"Yes." Mycroft's word was a groan, vibrating against the nape of Greg's neck. His breath was heated and his kisses slick and wet on Greg's skin. They moved together, the length of Mycroft's cock slipping between Greg's cheeks, teasing, and Greg gasped and pressed back against him, needing him.

One finger, cold and slick, slipped inside him and Greg breathed into it. "Yeah, please," he gasped. A moment later, Mycroft's cock, long and thick, penetrated him; Mycroft pressed in slowly, shivering. His weight bore Greg down into the mattress and Greg let Mycroft have him, fingers clutching the sheets hard as he bit the pillow to keep from crying out from the intensity of his pleasure.

"Let go, love, let go," Mycroft whispered, his body moving in a slow rhythm that was going to drive Greg mad. Greg's answer was a whimper, his eyes clenched tightly closed as Mycroft took him apart. Mycroft's hips hitched, twisting, and Greg shouted, his cock hard and aching as he was slowly fucked into the bed beneath him. "Yes," Mycroft hissed, "like that, like that." Mycroft held Greg down, fingers clenching his shoulders, thrusting harder as Greg let himself fall into the rhythm Mycroft set.

"God, Mycroft, more," Greg begged, arching his back to raise his hips into Mycroft's thrusts. Mycroft pushed against Greg's thigh with one knee, forcing his legs to open further, and Greg gave in to it, feeling his lover moving more deeply inside him; it was robbing him of any ability to think, and he loved it.

Mycroft's breath was harsh and rasping and he chanted Greg's name like a prayer, kissing his neck and his shoulder, nipping at his ear and the curve of his jaw; Greg could feel himself shattering, could feel Mycroft's body shudder as they both came apart, harsh and sudden, a flood of bliss blowing through him. And then Mycroft held him, hot tears falling on Greg's temple as Mycroft clung to him, trembling.

Still gasping for breath, Greg raised a hand and buried his fingers in Mycroft's hair, tugging his face down into a shaky kiss. Greg lay beneath him, eyes closed, his body still as Mycroft's hips kept moving slowly; he was still half-hard inside Greg. "It's okay," Greg whispered. "We're okay."

"I love you," Mycroft murmured, sniffling, his body finally coming to rest on Greg's back. "What did I do to deserve you?"

"I'm here," Greg told him. "I'll be here. And when Sherlock gets home, we'll both be here to meet him, right?"

Mycroft curled around him, holding him tight. He nodded. "Yes. We will."
Greg could hear the promise in it.

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