THAT'S WHAT PEOPLE DO

by AlJeDd

Summary

Sherlock lands himself in trouble when a certain spider catches him in their web. He is saved by the Watsons; but that isn't necessarily a good thing. Mycroft is completely lost.
Chapter 1

It happened at once, like most abductions do - grab and run. Sherlock had sensed something was going on; didn't deduce fast enough until it was 'lights out, Sherly!' and he was down for a few hours. In that time, he was taken to a building, not abandoned but barren from regular life. John had no idea (he was out with Mary) and wouldn't know until after it was too late. How cliché.

James Moriarty is a man you do not want to piss off. He has threads, connections in his web that could destroy people's lives in an instant. What does he do with his web? He plays with his beloved Sherlock, of course. His ever loyal sniper, Sebastian Moran is a violent but fair man; he will not hurt the innocent unless under vehement orders. Even then, his reluctance is well hidden but still there, if you look closely enough; victims tend to miss that on the brink of death though.

When Sherlock wakes, his head is heavy and he cannot make his brain cooperate with his mouth. Instead of insults and petty remarks, Sherlock manages to only groan and squirm. With little vigour, he lifts his skull only for it to drop with a soft thump onto concrete flooring. Brilliant. His eyes scrunch up at the throbbing pain that stays with him after the impact, and it certainly does not help him come to. Foggy vision removes his power of deduction and renders the detective feeling exposed. He is not able to comprehend the situation or where he is or who the people are around him although he can deduce that he has been kidnapped. Gradually, the drugs pumping through his system settle, and he is able to blink away the colourful haze over his irises.

Before him, and extremely close for comfort, a pair of wide, doe eyes stare at him, blackness swirling across dark brown. It startles Sherlock, but jumping away proves to be difficult as his lead-like limbs shift only an inch or so in each direction before the primitive tethers refrain them from further movement. Sherlock groans again, casting his eyes on the background behind the excited face in front of him. The room is white, only white and bare from what he can see. There is no furniture, nothing significant or evident of his whereabouts. There are wooden boards blocking the outside view, so he is unable to work out his location from there and the dimly lit room provides no guess as to the time either. This has really been thought through, Sherlock thinks.

“Ah, you're awake! That's excellent, I was just beginning to get bored. Are you with us, Mr Holmes?” James enquires, tapping a pale cheek with his finger. Sherlock groans again, taking a long blink as the drugs subside internally. Sebastian backs off for the time being, relaxing his stance as there seems to be no threat.

“Oh dear, do you need a minute darling? I'm sure you'll be right as rain in a moment!” James laughs, eyes growing cold in a split second as he grabs a fistful of chocolate curls and yanks them towards him. Sherlock cannot refrain from yelping - the pain throbs through his skull just as bad as the dull headache does. He blinks again, this time a lot faster and his eyes finally focus, blinking away the glazed over appearance as his muddled brain makes sense at the predicament.

“Sebby, my love. Untie our Sherly, will you? We wouldn't want him hurting himself so soon, not until I have my turn first.” Sebastian is there immediately and complies, freeing the captive man easily. Sherlock struggles to sit up, but Seb presses his foot down on the other's shoulder and watches as the exhausted man relents under the pressure. His body is still weak, but Sherlock is certain he can deduce his way out of this, if only he could make his tongue move properly...

“Darling, stay with us now as we have a lot to get through before you can sleep, alright? Keep them pretty eyes open for me, atta boy!” Jim chides, a shark grin curling his lips as he pats Sherlock's sore head. Seb smirks at the wince, before retreating again to the side of James. The man loses his smile and sends a swift kick to Sherlock's stomach, revelling in his pain. “Oh c'mon now honey; that
wasn't even *that* bad! There's plenty more where that came from,” he teases, kicking Sherlock's abdomen again.

The brunet curls up, too tired to defend himself and not strong enough to do anything else. With the click of Jim's fingers, Sherlock is hauled to his feet and dragged away from the room. He looks back to see the hooks with rope that he was previously secured to, and the dried blood on the floor that definitely isn't his; it churns his burning stomach. During the transport, Sherlock gains some balance but is quickly denied of the luxury to walk, and is mercilessly forced to hang limp in Sebastian's grip until they reach their destination - which happens to be another empty room down the corridor and to the right of the room they were in previously. Sherlock marks that down in his memory for future reference - if he ever wants to escape or at least devise a plan to he needs to know his way around, familiarise himself with the environment.

This time, however, the walls are a light, faded blue and there is no blood anywhere. A table stands proud and short (a bit like John, Sherlock muses), holding two pairs of leather straps at each vertex that seem strong and sturdy. Sherlock knows already who will end up there, and does not struggle when he is roughly pushed down and pinned as Jim takes his time tightening the buckles on the skinny limbs. The restrained man grunts as each side is yanked to test their strength; he won't be getting out of these any time soon.

“Sherly, my darling, aren't you being such a good boy? I've never seen you so...pliant before. IT DETESTS ME. Where's your fight gone, Mr Holmes? Come now darling I know you want to punch me reeeaaaal hard in the face right now but you haven't so much as blinked since you've been here! It's sad really. I was gunna break you down, BURN YOU, burn the heart out of you, juuust like I promised! Where is my Sherly?

“You know, I think by now you will have come up with all the different ways on how to escape, or distract me; you've probably even guessed everything I'm about to say. Have you? You don't know much about me, but I know *everything* about you, isn't that right Sebby? William Sherlock Scott Holmes. What a charmer. Such a long winded name though, don't you think? I think I'll just stick to Will from now on, or Sherly. You like them names, don't you darling? Of course-” James blabbers, giving Sherlock time to observe his situation. He gives him enough time to think about escape and all the possible ways to manipulate the man, but they're one step ahead of him.

Sherlock knows he has been sussed out, so instead of showing his dread he relaxes, laid back and eyes on the ceiling above as he listens to a rather heated phone call between Jim and an anonymous caller. *It's all very abrupt.* They have it out for each other, until the line is cut dead as Jim sends a string of insults down the phone. He grows frustrated, and lashes out at Sherlock. A slap to the face, *hard.* And another, before Seb intervenes and creates a barrier with his toned arms. Jim cries out in anger and storms away, muttering to himself as he exits. Sebastian does not even spare a glance towards Sherlock as he follows James, seeming awfully similar to a puppy stalking its master. Just like John is known as.

In the silence, Sherlock contemplates sleeping (he hasn't done that in a while) and allowing himself a rest so he is refreshed for his near future. He isn't certain what might happen during his stay but with Jim's anger he knows it won't be a pleasant one; or a predictable one, for that matter. With a small grunt, the brunet is able to shift himself into an easier position as his eyes fall closed - his breathing evens out after only six minutes and he sleeps deeper than he predicted. The quiet lasts for a few hours, one before James and Sebastian's arrival Sherlock awakens.

He casts his dry eyes along the room upon rousing, checking for any tell tale signs of his whereabouts. Without any land marks outside or furniture to go by, Sherlock is clueless and even applauds Jim for his efforts. Some way into his consciousness, his body drags his whirring mind
back into the abyss of darkness and he sleeps again, peacefully. In contrast to his second awakening.

Water, seemingly colder than ice is carelessly dumped over the sleeping man's face, shocking him into alertness as he jolts up. The restraints instantly stop him from lurching into a sitting position and he cannot hide the grimace accompanying the action. Jim grins, his shark teeth twinkling under his lips. Sebastian backs away with the empty bucket, dripping water onto the floor as he tidies away the mess.

Sherlock grits his teeth, lying back down on the table with his eyes locked on the black holes adjacent. James sighs, looking sorrowful and glum as he paces around the table, hands clasped in front. He mutters to Sebastian about some plan, and asks him to get the equipment whilst he 'prepares' the patient. Sherlock's eyebrows furrow in confusion, already thinking up four ideas as to what might be happening. He rapidly reads Jim's body language, but cannot decipher what has been decided - that thought churns his empty stomach. What was four ideas reduces to two, as James wraps a cloth over his eyes and ties it tightly, so it adds pressure to his skull in a completely uncomfortable way.

His first theory is that they shall make him use his other senses to identify objects. It seems simple enough, but he doubts that will happen because James is far from simple. The other thought is that they shall beat him, using their power over him to catch him unaware, considering his sight is gone. Sherlock grows nervous; his sight is his greatest control and apparently his only weakness (well, unless someone threatens to hurt Molly, Greg, Mrs Hudson or John - he may even find himself protective of Mycroft too), and to have that taken away from him almost reduces him to...to a human. He shudders. Jim is quiet, but his significant cologne wafting around the room proves that he isn't alone. Heavy footsteps reappear and James is happily thanking Sebastian for bringing him the equipment.

Holmes shivers, teeth chattering as he attempts to still himself. Something is plugged into the socket and from the laboured breathing the object has some weight. A whirring sound proceeds for a few seconds before a barely audible hum falls upon the room. Sherlock listens carefully, straining to hear what is going on over the clattering of metal on various surfaces. The footsteps return to his side, as another bucket of water is thrown over his head. His teeth begin to chatter in a way he cannot prevent, although his efforts to disguise the discomfort are in vain.

Sherlock has little time to compose himself, as Moriarty deems it appropriate to collect whatever the metal rod is from Sebastian's hands and jab it into skinny ribs. Oh. Oh. The brunet yelps, unable to catch the pained sound in his clogged throat as electricity surges through his veins. Jim elicits a menacing laugh, singing an awful tune as he chooses random spots on Sherlock's flesh to poke at. White hot agony sears through Holmes' body, jerking his muscles in the most undignifying way. His body's futile attempt at escaping the intrusion fails tremendously, as his limbs simply collapse under the tight bonds holding him (for the most part) trapped.

Sebastian remains a silent observer, only keeping an eye on the machine whilst his boss has his fun. James cackles, humming now as the rod is pressed with a little extra pressure to sensitive skin, watching the muscles underneath dance. It is only once he has tired himself out and when Sherlock is teetering on consciousness that he stops, listening to the machines hum subside under his command. If Sherlock could, he would sigh in relief but in his current predicament talking or moving his lungs further than shallow breaths seems like a very bad idea. His limp body slumps on the table, twitching as the after effects of the electrocution sizzle under his skin. The blindfold is roughly removed and bright eyes blink away from the sudden light. Relieved, the man abandons his gaze on the ceiling, becoming a rock participant as he does nothing more than listen to the other men conversing.

James leaves abruptly, Seb in tow carrying (albeit appears more like lugging) the dreaded bulk of metal out of the room. Post departure, Sherlock cries, although he refuses to acknowledge it nor
refrain from trying to stop it. Limbs burn with exertion and scours along his skin from the raw-rubbing restraints. His spine feels like it is floating, tingles travelling up and down the knobs as the water intensifies the reaction. Shivering, and trembling, Sherlock calms himself, forcing himself not to hide in his mind palace. Eventually, he has an emotion check and the tears disappear, leaving only tracks across his face as evidence of their presence; his breathing returns to a normal, rhythmic pattern and his heart rate regulates too.

Docile and composed, the man lies still and pretends not to think, his appendages itching to steeple under his chin as he focuses on untying knots. Unfortunately, he decided years ago that information like this would be irrelevant, completely dising the world's hatred of him as he thought he would be rescued if ever in danger. Oh how he deduced so wrongly. He only hopes Mycroft has tabs on him and shall somehow be able to track his location. The man has openly admitted his concerns for his younger brother.

Night draws in - Sherlock can only work that out by his body's natural clock as he grows tired (this time not from the 'activity' prior). Unwilling to sleep, he dozes lightly but the inevitable darkness pulls him into an abyss of slumber, happy to be allowed rest; blissfully unaware of the torturous days to come.
Chapter 2

Chapter Summary

he's breaking

Sherlock has settled into a tedious routine. He is bathed daily in ice water, fed scarce pieces of bread and sips of hydration, and allowed four hours of sleep. At least he understands what they require from him. He is not quite certain as to their motives for this situation, however, and asking for answers has not ended well for him (punishments are so brutal).

Moriarty is smart - he's thought of everything. Sherlock has been denied the luxuries of moving, talking and going to the bathroom; he is punished if he messes himself. And that can hardly be fair, right? Refusing a man of his bowel and bladder movements yet offering no alternative. Mr Holmes is lost. Negotiation does not work either, he has not yet deduced a way to use the bathroom without causing trouble and a very sore backside.

Of course, it isn't quite enough to dissolve his psyche yet, yet, but he feels himself slipping into mind-numbing boredom. The only stimulation he receives these days are the times when there is someone in the room for him to focus solely on their being; pleasing them certainly better than provoking their wanton minds. Instead, he behaves meekly and obeys to their harsh commands, unable to resist the few remarks he manages to slide into conversation. No matter how badly his skin is beaten, he cannot resist temptation of petty insults that don't really get him anywhere but over someone's knee. And that's when he's been removed briefly from the restraints.

The bed he lay on when electrocuted has been replaced by a cold, metal slab that freezes his skin and provides zero comfort. Constantly shivering, Sherlock can only beg via whines for warmth - although he is never allowed anything except for boxers. His boxers. They stripped the other remnants of clothing the second day of his arrival, having done so previously but now having a permanent departure. He misses clothes. Where did his beloved coat go? He sighs.

Jim Moriarty delights in his pain, eye widening in joy and shark grin splitting his cheeks at the grunts and groans and cries and whines from Sherlock's mostly gagged mouth; even Sebastian enjoys the strained noises of agony from the spirited detective. They marvel in his fight, knowing soon enough the pain and isolation and pure boredom will erode his mind to nothing. They will make sure he scoffs upon his old self - his body is more than just a transport system, sensations (good and bad) show him that. His mind will only last so long when deprived of basic needs and stimulation; he can only wish that the games Moriarty plays are difficult enough for his mind to work at.

They give him little time out of the bonds, to stretch his rapidly atrophying muscles and limp his way around the barren room. If, on excellent days, they are feeling generous, Sherlock's captors will have him sit in a bath of cold (but not icy) water. Sherlock ensures he displays his gratitude by wriggling contently and whimpering at the men towering above him - he's grown used to everybody being taller by significance in comparison to himself. Jim especially basks in his pitiful whines when he is punished for his poor behaviour, which may include sneezing, coughing, wetting, excreting or even just moving the wrong way (his temper is a struggle to handle; even worse so on bad days).

The punishments usually consist of beatings using any kind of object, ranging from lighter things such as lamps or tennis rackets to harder, more sturdier items like baseball bats and on rare but
extreme occasions: DIY tools (hammers, screwdrivers, and sometimes even drills switch on and driven too close to his sensitive flesh for comfort). Then there are spankings, when he hasn't been so bad, for example, using the bathroom results in swats counting to at least one hundred, and depending on the size of the mess it is given via hand, paddle or switch. Other tortures include breaking fingers (Sherlock hasn't had that it quite a while and he is rather glad), electrocution with or without water, water-boarding, suffocation and starvation. And yes, although all those painful punishments have forced him docile and inconsiderable to escape, they haven't even come close to the psychological sufferings he has faced.

The worst one is denial to talk. He cannot speak, simple as. If he does, he is either ignored or gagged - occasionally strangled to silence him. He is not fed for days; he has always been tolerable with lack of food but never for such lengthy periods has he been refused nutrients. Weight loss is visible in all parts of his body now, malnutrition obvious even to the blindest of people. His body clock has unfortunately readjusted itself for his short bursts of sleep (he gets a small shock every time his eyes shut for more than a few seconds when he is due to be conscious); he wishes it hadn't because now he has no track of the actual time and since being caught scratching tallies on the edges of the old table he has had no way of counting how long he has been locked away for.

He thought by now they would've sent him outside, to test whether he'd try to escape, or to just mix things up in his routine and leave him utterly confused. But no: they have stuck to a monotonous schedule that has ingrained itself in Holmes’ mind, and the boredom accompanying it is more than enough to send him insane. Maybe that's why Jim ignores him all the time, settling for talking in a low, barely audible voice to Sebastian and never changing his routine so he has nothing to look forward to. Not even the night brings pleasure, to be at peace and left alone until morning because he has associated loneliness with bad behaviour. Has Jim realised that yet?

That brings him to his most hated punishment, reserved for random times when he shouts out in pain or whines too loudly or simply gets on his kidnappers' nerves. Isolation. Complete and utter isolation. Pinioned to the slab, gagged and in the dark, wearing on his tattered boxers and sound-muffling headphones. In the pitch black he struggles to use his other senses, during days or even weeks of nothingness as he is deprived of sight, hearing, touch, smell and taste. There is nothing to stimulate his mind except pure, unadulterated panic; it settles deep within his bones.

There is nothing in his mind palace to help him in these serious predicaments, as he rifles through hundreds of bookcases and even traipses down to his basement. However, in the many hours of silence and barrenness Sherlock cultivates a dungeon; one with soundproof walls and a thick, strong door to protect him. He can do whatever he wants down there, unafraid of punishment or reprimand as he treasures his greatest memories and knowledge there, so as not to lose it for however long he is trapped in Moriarty's web. It is warm and cosy in his dungeon: he can read books and recall cases and even watch crappy TV in his favourite armchair, watching a dozing Redbeard beside his feet. It is nice there, but it isn't always easy to retreat here when isolated.

If Seb is given the orders to do so, he shall pick music contrasting to Sherlock's taste and blare it, so not matter how hard Holmes attempts to ignore the sounds filling his skull he cannot remove it, and therefore lacks concentration to be able to visit his palace. Those times are by far the most torturous. His mental calender is muddled now, there was a storm during one of his electrocution sessions and the ink on the time diary ran, becoming incoherent and useless. Without being able to ruin his nails by scouring lines into the metal, he cannot decipher day from night as his sleeping pattern is not consecutive. All part of the plan, of course.

*Clever, clever Jim,* Sherlock thinks, on days when his mind is clear from the hazy drugs circulating his system. They keep him pliant, paralysed yet aware, or just about. Smaller dosages *(or are they different drugs?)* render him weak, barely able to move albeit completely aware of what is
happening to him. There's another drug, which does not inhibit his movements but causes searing pain, usually administrated during particularly severe retribution where he is most vulnerable. Aside from this, as long as Sherlock controls his motions - and emotions too, he hates for them to see him cry - and holds his bladder and bowels until Jim is in a good mood, then he is alright. The forced silence is a difficulty of his, still hasn't been beaten hard enough out of him yet. But Jim promises to succeed in doing just that.

They just have to give it time. That's what Jim and Sebastian say, away from Sherlock's ears. That's what Greg and Molly and John and Mrs Hudson say; even Sally and Anderson feel slightly lighter (and not in a pleasant way) during his absence. Mycroft tries his hardest, he does, but it's hard. How are you supposed to react when someone dear to you disappears, as if they never even existed? As if they fell of the face of the planet? Explaining it to the frustrated is much more difficult, though. Giving it time is the worst for the grieving and the best for the celebrating. Sherlock doesn't desire time; he wants death.

Death would mean he'd never have to suffer again, once he's dead, there's nothing - he believes. No floating soul or weeping ghost, just a corpse and memories remain. If he ever did get out of here, it would be hard to recover and he'd prefer not to have that burden on anyone, or have to face the inevitable turmoil on his own self when nobody can empathise, only sympathise with his distress. Sure, people will have been treated worse than he has but Sherlock is dealing with James Moriarty, possibly the most dangerous man on the planet (now that Magnussen is dead). And with his mind palace crumbling, he'll have nothing to work his way towards apart from the memories he has kept in his dungeon, but he can't recover what hasn't been lost, can he? No point in soldiering on if he's reduced to what he and Mycroft once laughed about.

He supposes he'll just have to give it time.
Chapter 3

Sherlock has gone insane, he is certain of it. He knows because the brief attention he now has to earn is so precious, and he craves it. Jim notes it too, focusing on Sherlock and forcing eye contact as the broken man whimpers and squirms under the intense stares. He'll stroke Holmes' arm lightly, barely grazing the skin as goosebumps form under the sensation. Sherlock needs someone to pay attention to him, but he has no idea as to how he achieves it.

These days, his silence and cooperation gains him longer sleeping periods, extending to at least seven on one case, last week. Sherlock felt refreshed after that, and it wasn't because he'd just had icy water thrown over him. Jim had actually spoke to him, praising his good behaviour and refraining all punishments. Sherlock has fell too far into the rabbit hole; without praise he believes he's been bad and needs reprimand - even if he has been innocent.

Sebastian dishes out the retributions, but Jim acts more like a parent, providing the miniature comfort he rarely displays and involving himself wholly in feeding and bathing sessions. He would definitely have a motherly role if they were a family. Holmes cries sometimes, in the dark, at his neglect and tears of frustration pour down his face at his weakness. Scoffing at what he has been reduced to. The cravings are the worst, his body begs not for food but for touch, any form of comfort no matter how slight, just so he can reassure his sanity that he hasn't been completely forgotten by the world, and yes, he does in fact still exist and isn't dead yet (although that would be great too).

Today, however, varies from the other monotonous days. It begins at five in the morning, when only Jim is up and ready to start his day with Sherlock. He does not wake Sebastian, preferring to greet his captive man alone and in the privacy of the dull room. He dresses, casually, in a v-neck top and loose jeans that differ so strongly from his usual attire. James practically skips to the other building, up the stairs and along the winding corridors to the end expanse, allowing himself several seconds to stare at the body sleeping peacefully on the table.

After the moment of quiet, he begins to clatter, deliberately causing raucous to rouse the bound man. Sherlock, with a long and deep groan, opens his dry eyes to meet the pale ceiling. Bemused, his casts his vision around the room to locate the source of his awakening when he sees hawk, yet doe eyes boring into his. He startles, but forces the action away internally to appear collected as his lids narrow into slits, fuelled by warped hatred that bubbles beneath the surface of his skin.

“Oh Will. Sneering like that will get you nowhere, it won't.” Jim says, stalking rapidly to the slab and leaning down extremely close to Sherlock's face. At this, he cannot hide his discomfort and presses his head further into the metal, enjoying the pain of that more than the irises on his. Warm breath flutters against his skin, heating his cheeks in a faint blush as the intimacy frightens the detective.

“Apparently doing anything seems to get you nowhere. I'm not quite sure what you're referring to. Are you suggesting my attitude will change whether I am still bound?” Sherlock hopes desperately for release, even just for a few moments so his chaffed skin can breathe and ward off potential infections. Jim raises his eyebrows, lips quirking into a toothy grin as he ponders the enquiry, ignoring the broken rule of communication - he must be bored, then.

“Darling, I think, considering you've been such a good boy lately, that we shall spend the day together. How does that sound?” Jim suggests, dismissing the question prior for this bribery that Sherlock catches instantly. He contemplates the results of staying with James, and he decides he likes the idea more than remaining trapped here all alone (again). Jim may even settle his craving for touch, too.
Nodding, the man shifts, twisting his restrained limbs awkwardly to face Moriarty at a better angle, using the few seconds of distraction to read the spider. James claps his hands, eyes lighting brighter than twinkling stars as he kisses Sherlock's forehead and bounds away, declaring he shall return. Holmes relaxes, releasing a breath he doesn't remember retaining as he tweaks at his bonds to get into a more comfortable position. He counts silently, listening intently for any sign that Moriarty is advancing, and by the time the man has stormed back into the room, with Sebastian in tow, it has tallied up to seventeen minutes. *Okay, so at least I know where seventeen minutes of my life has been wasted,* Sherlock laughs mentally.

The burly man heads directly towards Sherlock's feet, snipping away at the scouring rope with scissors that are just under the size of garden shears. They easily slice through the bonds, effectively freeing Sherlock's ankles as he sighs happily and stretches his legs, finally allowed to bend them fully (although he notes he has lost some mobility). The wrists come next, and once they have been freed Holmes nearly kicks himself at how seemingly simple it would've been to escape them, if he'd ha the right mindset.

Jim envelopes Sherlock in a bone-crushing hug, squeezing both air an coherence out of the man who struggles to wriggle away. When the grip loosens, he melts into the hold and whimpers in content at the attention and contact. James tips his chin to rest on the other's curls, mouthing imperatives to Seb as he strokes the man's arms. Sherlock twitches, wanting to find this so wrong and horrible but his conditioning has left him docile and placated with the intimacy. As cool air hits Sherlock's skin, he whines as instinctively reaches out in attempt to regain to broken contact, stopping only when Jim tuts and shakes his head.

“There's plenty of time for that later.” Jim states, and that is the end of that.

Later, when Sherlock has been fed and given a blanket, Jim leaves him to his own devices as he takes a call. It must be important with all the shouting, and Sherlock can only be glad that it isn't aimed at him. Instead of grasping the opportunity to escape, he paces around the room, awed by the decoration. Scanning book spines, he notices a few familiars, ones that are stashed in the cramped shelves of 221B or from his childhood, if he recalls correctly. Inside his mind palace, emerges a deranged Sherlock Holmes that seeks stimulation, finding plenty in the simple task of reading. His has so much gratitude for being allowed to roam, albeit he can only stay in the one room and he is supervised via cameras.

Upon return, Moriarty is enraged, storming into the room with profanities muffled under his breath. Pounding towards his prey: who happens to be a shitting-himself Sherlock, he violently grabs both shoulders and rattles him like a toy. His eyes drown in blackness and swallow Sherlock's body hungrily, seeking God knows in the sight before him. Repressing a whimper, the brunet ducks his head obediently and awaits a blow to the face.

The stinging takes a few seconds to settle, throbbing in time with his bleeding nose and pounding skull. Heart rate elevated and pupils dilated, Sherlock cries out in earnest as Jim takes pleasure in abusing his weak form. By the third slap, his knees buckle and he kneels, keeping his palms splayed on the floor for balance as he sways with a wave of dizziness. Nausea washes over him, as he doubles over from the strong kick to his stomach, potentially rupturing organs. *He'd be great at football,* Sherlock thinks, morbidly amused at the sick joke as he wheezes for breath.

He deduces that the excuse for this beating will be for talking, although it appears Jim had quite the nasty phone call. *Good, a taste of his own medicine, the bastard.* At a swift right hook, he is down fully, lying on his winded stomach as he wraps his arms protectively around his head, all the while whimpering loudly, but never begging. He doesn't beg. James has a good go at kicking him again,
over and over before restarting the relentless beating to Sherlock's face. He splits skin, bruises flesh and burns Holmes' psyche once and for all. As meek as a kitten, the beaten man mewls (yes, *mewls*) in agony, his voice cracking as tears race down his cheeks.

Moriarty eventually - finally - tires himself out, slumping onto the couch as the last of his energy is transferred to Sherlock. He rubs his face in his hands, digging his palms into his eye sockets with an exasperated sigh. Sherlock unfurls himself, peeking timidly from his cocoon to see where the monster has slinked away to. Lanky limbs unravel like coil, until he has the strength to rise up onto all fours and crawl in between Jim's legs. He has been taught to thank his captors for any form of punishment, rarely using words to express his thanks.

This time, he rests his swollen face on James' thigh, looking up from under long eyelashes innocently. It won't end in anything dubious, it never does. Jim isn't about sex, despite his flamboyance he told Sherlock they would only be sexual well further down the line, when all the blue-eyed man would want to do is please. That hasn't happened yet, and so his actions are taken as only an apology and nothing more. Through painful trial and error, Holmes has determined that he should not stop to think why he is apologising, he has done anything wrong but further reprimand will ensue if he tries dissenting his superiors.

To his sincere relief, Jim accepts Sherlock's sorry, pitiful face with a ruffle of the hair, mussing curls and giving the man an extra tinge of raggedness that has James regretting the sex agreement. But he cannot have his darling now, not until the man is begging for it. He has shown what it is like to be alone, ingrained fear and danger in loneliness so that Sherlock graciously appreciates days like this, he's never been allowed from the slab since he got here. This newfound freedom is costly. Despite the captive's weakness, he knows with such a strong mind (of course he's aware the man still hasn't fully broken yet) it could be almost easy to manipulate or devise an escape route, put it into action and get out here before anyone can so much as blink. But he is one step ahead, having reduced all possibilities of escape and ensuring that Sherlock will be terrified of punishment, hopefully scaring him into acquiescence. *The perfect little pet.*

Sherlock nuzzles the hand that cups his face, feeling the nerves fade away as he realised Jim isn't angry anymore. Blood trickles from the peak of his eyebrow, drizzling lazily into his eyes as he also has blood dribble from his nose and a gash on his cheekbone. Jim dismisses the tingling in his palm from sending so many blows, understanding yet not sympathetic for Sherlock's sorrowful and awfully loud whimpers. Speaking of said man; he sways on his knees, disgruntled that laying his head down helps nothing. The nausea ebbs and flows, but the throbbing is insistent and pricks at his sanity.

*If short arse can batter me, then I'm done for,* Sherlock cries mentally, sinking further into Jim's thigh until his wounded body is hauled up and set down on a higher and warm surface. He keeps his eyes shut, snuggling into the abyss of comfort as he wards off the pain, embraces it and directs it elsewhere. His mind is never clear when there is pain, and the tiny, mind palace Sherlock stumbles as an earthquake destroys one of his bookcases, deleting several experiments from his mind. The miniature mental form of himself grows increasingly frustrated and upset, resorting to throwing items around (just about anything he can get his hands on) as he sees red. Inside, he is strong, prepared to fight. But externally, he cowers away from the thought and obeys, reminding himself not to be so rash; after Jim has proven his power over him.

Jim sighs, placing a splayed palm on Sherlock's spine to rub it in what he hopes seems affectionate as the man snivels in self-pity. Seb enters, carrying a tub of lukewarm water and an old, ragged cloth that looks similar to Holmes right now. James pushes Sherlock back enough to gain access to his face, observing the red-rimmed eyes and bitten lips. His eyes graze along the injuries he gave to the man without reason, but he does not feel remorse. More... understanding, of how Sherlock feels,
although he cannot find it in himself to care much.

He helps Sebastian clean away the blood, setting the miserable male on the floor as they haul him to a cracked bathtub to wash. His face is patched up, but they can't do much about the extensive bruising already blooming across Sherlock's torso. They wash and comb his hair, and by the end of it Holmes is shivering, teeth chattering and the captor's hands have gone numb with the cold. Only Seb can imagine how much worse it must feel for the kidnapped man. Sherlock appears spaced out, lost in thought because he does not even so much as blink when he is presented naked to both men during the bath time - not even when he is dressed in another set of boxers and sent back to the metal slab.

Sherlock is crying in his head, shivering and bleeding and hurting. He cannot make the bad thoughts go away, patronising words of hate spat at his form as thick, prickled branches wind around his limbs and yank him into an abyss of darkness. In his mind palace, the dungeon reserved for bad memories welcomes him with open arms and shark grins that resemble Jim's grins closely; he yells for help but there is none and-

The brunet comes to abruptly, lurching on the slab as his limbs are held down by chains. Chains, this time. Whimpering, the man settles again and ignores the eyes on him, lying his head down and wincing at the cold on his dripping hair, feeling droplets fall into his ears and sear his cuts. The burning only increases but making noises of complaint doesn't help anything, so Sherlock quietens and attempts to shut himself out again. He fails. His mind palace is in shambles, and until he can calmly collect himself and fully compose (not just to the outside world) then he will not be able to patch up the damage in his head.

Surprising. Magnificent. It is. How can one small beating - in comparison to all the abuse he has endured so far - make such a difference? Effect him so badly? Jim doesn't have a clue, nor does Sebastian but hey, it's working. It's finally breaking Sherlock into their perfect pet, the little dog they desire. Hopefully showing who's boss around this place, degrading him and forcing him to appreciate such minute luxuries will turn him into a person who can only think about making his superiors happy, having no other thoughts or wishes (and getting the lingering hope of escape banished from his battered yet resilient head).
Jim is having a stressful day, has had a few in the past week. It’s only Thursday, and Sebastian was the one to suggest channelling his anger through Sherlock. Not only would it calm Jim, but Sherlock would learn his place and ideally break faster. To nobodies surprise, it's working. Sherlock is quiet during beatings, knowing that he hasn't done anything wrong and that this is Moriarty being...well, Moriarty.

Sometimes James bursts through the room, the atmosphere immediately swallowing up the tension so the air is heavy enough to cut with the knives Seb uses during interrogations. In his hand, he shall clutch a riding crop, not dissimilar from Sherlock's, and hit him with it with as much force Holmes would use on corpses throughout his bruising experiment. He almost feels sorry for the dead bodies, left at the wrath of such pain - regardless whether or not they could feel it.

He has nothing to do, nothing to say and teeters on the edge of insanity. Which one? Well, Sherlock of course. His cravings for attention have spiralled out of control as now he weeps pitifully when alone and can only be consoled by the presence of either captor. Nowadays he is trusted to be untied for half an hour on good days, allowed to roam an empty room under supervision, though now he cannot balance his mobility with his mind due to atrophied muscles and his beaten state.

After Tuesday evening, he has no right to wear clothing - Jim disrobes his boxers. Shivering was familiar to him before, and it surprised Sherlock at how insulated that small piece of clothing was before it was taken away. So that is why, now that he is only bathed in the tub (he only sleeps and eats on his slab), he refuses to fight, in fear of being starved of stripped of something more than physical. Eating times are held in the blank room; Sherlock kneels and is fed liquid foods that only stave off the tip of the hunger pangs but keep him alive enough to remain conscious and aware all day. It pains him.

He can only think about Jim and Sebastian. How nice it is to have their company when only silence is his friend for hours on end. Back before abduction, he would've preferred staying on his own with only the wall and his violin and his thoughts, but now with only a ceiling and his mind chamber there is nothing but loneliness. The sensation of having his hair gently tugged and hands carding through his hair are what he enjoys most, wanting that more than anything (albeit praise is hot on its heels). Tonight, Jim is feeling pretty aggressive and appears to have had a shit day. Despite his usual huffs and storming around, Sherlock is surprised when he is untied and dragged by the scalp to the bathroom, differing from his regular journey to the bland room.

Inside the bathroom, he is shoved in the general direction of the toilet and told to sit atop the lid. Doing so, he sits quietly as shivers jolt his spine from the cool on his posterior. After what seems like forever, he is given permission to look up and move to the bathtub. Expecting to be washed, he sits inside but furrows his eyebrows as he is held in place by Seb and ordered to tip his head back. With the easier access, Holmes quickly realises the predicament. He is sitting there not to be bathed, no, there isn't even water.

A loud buzzing sound echoes off the tiled walls as the back of Sherlock’s head is given pressure. Starting from the bottom, clumps of hair flutter onto the floor of the tub, cascading down Holmes’ back as it goes. He whimpers, twisting and leaning away despite being slapped for the motion. Jim does not utter a word as he further shaves he back of the previously curly-haired man's head. When the back is styled in a buzz cut, he moves over to the front and dismisses the begging.

“Come now, darling Will. It's not hurting you, is it? Be a good boy and shush now so I can finish.” Jim mutters, focusing his attention on the rapidly disappearing hair.
“P-Please stop, I don't like it! C-cold!” Sherlock whimpers in response, desperation falling out of his mouth faster than the tears from his eyes. He cares not for the petulant behaviour, simply wanting to get away before it is too late; but he's already lost too many curls.

“Hush.” Jim says in a tone that holds warning but is light.

Sherlock quietens, hoping that his obedience will get him somewhere (though he doesn't quite know where there is yet) or at least out of the bathtub and away from the little piece of himself he had left. Jim grins as he observes his work, trusting Holmes to stay where he is as he and Sebastian get to work removing the hair from the tub via a hoover. Sherlock is silent, par several sniffs as he watches the curls be sucked away. What did he do wrong to deserve this?

When the last of the hair has been discarded, Jim plugs the tub and fills it, ensuring his captive man remains in it. The water rapidly adjusts from lukewarm to scalding to freezing within seconds, keeping Sherlock on his toes as he sits rigid, spine completely straight in anxiety. He gives off distressed whimpers every so often, not from a fault of his own, and nobody bothers reprimanding him for it so he uses his fingernails to dig into his other palm. Once the bath has filled up until roughly Sherlock's thighs, the faucet is cut off and Sherlock is abandoned there without orders.

He cannot cope without either someone supervising him or having orders to listen to. Now he feels exposed, not because he is bare but due to the thought of being here alone, without any rules to prevent him from punishment. So, he sits. Does not move. Barely breathes. His eyes water from not blinking, albeit they sting from previous crying. By the time James returns, the prior warm water is cool to the touch and Sherlock shivers. James holds a translucent cup in his right hand, which he uses to dump the bath water over Holmes' head. With his other hand, he runs his palm over the rough scalp, sending Sherlock into a fit of whimpers at the foreign sensation.

Sebastian returns too, to help wash Sherlock's body whilst Moriarty tends to his lack of hair. He uses shampoo, as if to torture the man and spends time lathering the stuff into his scalp, emitting yelps from the man who isn't used to the primitive feeling. Moran completely cleans him, washing away caked-on blood and tears and grime (anything that shouldn't be there, really) before rinsing it all away and waiting for Jim to finish up his torment. Eventually he relents, setting aside the half-empty bottle of shampoo and hastily scrubs away the bubbles, leaving behind tender redness that burns like fire for Sherlock.

Said man is asked to stand, but under such stress he has had a silent and very well repressed panic attack that has left his anxiety levels on a high. His body trembles, from a mix of things but mostly the aftershock of the events beforehand as he obeys. Sherlock refuses to cast his eyes to the ground, knowing he'll see the remainder of his hair and abuse floating in the dirty water. His eyes stare straight ahead at the wall, and his body is still rigid, like the metal slab he sleeps on. The tub is drained as he is smothered in a towel and lifted out onto the floor and from there rapidly rubbed. It hurts, but Sherlock feels numb and cannot find the strength to do anything but stand there and wait.

He half expects to be given clothes, or at least a new set of boxers so when he is handed neither he feels downhearted and vaguely surprised. However he does not provide an ounce of complaint and instead keeps his mouth shut as Seb takes a strong hold on his bicep and drags him out to the blank room. In there, Jim proceeds to force him down on his knees, circling a hand around his neck and tightening it. Sherlock gasps, begging with wide eyes for air as the edges of his vision dot in colours.

Before darkness can surround him, Sherlock is pulled back to consciousness and the dots disappear, leaving him gulping down oxygen gratefully. Sebastian watches from afar, eyes boring into Sherlock's face as Jim laughs manically, irises glinting with evil. Holmes avoids the gaze, turning his head at an angle and down, successfully warding away the eyes but baring his neck to James.
Moriarty grasps the opportunity, plunging a syringe deep into Sherlock's vein. The man collapses, head crashing to the floor with a clearly audible thump.

James locates him back to the slab, allowing Sebastian to pack in for the night as Jim cleans up. He envelopes a clump of hair to send to John, giggling at the thought of his inevitable horrified reaction. Whilst his pet is out for at least a day, he can focus on moving to a different place, closer to his branch of the black market. Where he can keep his threads. Where Sherlock will never be found.

One day, he hopes Sherlock will only have thoughts for him, will not be able to recollect ever having a life away from this. Away from his master. For John to have never existed in his life; he wants Sherlock to be so loyal. So loyal. And he will. Jim has made it his mission - God knows once he has put his mind to something (or that something has sparked his interest), he will not hesitate to take drastic measures in completing his mission. Succeeding his goal.

So he gathers up his many phones, each for a different connection, and equipment, such as blankets and clothing and feeding bottles and utensils and everything that he has ever used on Sherlock, loading it alone into a moving van. Who would guess the greatest detective in the world is tied up in the back of a moving-out van? He sure wouldn't if he were an ordinary person. Moriarty wonders aloud how long it will take for Holmes to bore him before he has to execute the man; he'll make it quick though; perhaps a bullet through the temple will be suitable enough.
Chapter 5

John takes shuddering breaths, gasps interrupting hiccups as he begs to a God he doesn't believe in for Sherlock to be alright. On the floor, an envelope with a collective of curls is strewn, alongside the apple he was previously eating. Mary rushes from the other room, gathering him in her arms as he stares at the parcel, sobs wracking his shoulders. He has no address to go on, nothing to tell him anything about where Sherlock might possibly be. But he didn't expect there would, really. In fact, he's shocked, surprised that he has even been notified on something Sherlock related - sure as hell the Yard haven't given him an inkling on the matter. Watson composes himself, wiping the liquid from his face on his sleeve as Mary crouches to examine the contents of the delivery. It was sent via regular post, nothing suspicious and nothing that could provide evidence (like a knock and run; they must know he has jacked the place out with security cameras).

And then they wonder, the two of them sat together on the couch, how they ended up with supposedly (hopefully) a chunk of Holmes' hair. Could it have been ragged out in a moment of fury? Or deliberately cut away; is all his hair gone or just that section? It is sick to think but decidedly better to contemplate than whether or not Sherlock is even still alive. John knows it is a taunt, perhaps a token to prove their power, or to have them question whether or not he is dead. Either way, John does not want to forget about this, he can't. He won't. The Yard will be able to test the hair, check where it could've been - though Sherlock wouldn't been able to track the location in under a minute. But Sherlock isn't here. And he isn't going to be found on his own.

On his way to work the day after (he finally collects himself and has the guts to do it) discovering the envelope, John drops the parcel off in Greg's office, giving a short explanation of how he ended up with it in his possession. Lestrade praises his quick thinking, taking the package straight to Molly to be checked out. The day is normal once that is done, almost boring if it weren't for the constant dread as to what might have happened - or what is happening to his best friend. Hours tick by until he is practically dragging Mary to Bart's declaring they give him answers. From the grime in the hair, and however the hell they do what they do (John doesn't have time to ponder that) to find out the location, it is tracked to a building not so abandoned by owned by an anonymous, fake identity.

Police are making their way to the building, unaware of a vehicle slithering away with a drugged Sherlock tied up on the backseat. Jim knows that the squad will be focusing on the contents of the building instead of who is driving around, they didn't even notice him slip away, the idiots. James chuckles at the thought, sparing a glance at the seat behind through the rear view mirror to see Sherlock barely rousing in his drug-induced sleep. Oh the power of drugs.

John stands close by to the scene, his eyes tracking any signs of suspicion. He sees a sleek black vehicle drive away in plain sight, through an alleyway that connects with another building an can clearly be mistaken for normal. But he knows that car isn't normal. He sprints towards the first officer he can and quickly recites Moriarty's name, pointing out the retreating car. The officer gathers a team, informing John to take a ride with one of the men (alongside Mary) to follow the car. He also promises to alert the officers crawling around, hoping to catch Jim today once and for all.

The Watsons are stuffed into Lestrade's car, and John notices Donovan's silence. She stares straight ahead, scribbling down notes on John's description of the vehicle they're tracking. Police cars are avoided, private ones used to follow Jim so not to have him freak and potentially injure anyone. John can tell, even though he has not yet seen the driver he is certain that that car is associated with Moriarty.
They spend twenty minutes calmly cruising until the car in front realises the situation and begins to speed up. Within sixty seconds there is a full on pursuit, and then another five minutes the car is skidding to a stop as a couple of men jump out and scamper off over a wall. Men follow, clutching weapons as the criminals escape fast. John grips Mary's hand and she squeezes it reassuringly, not caring to mention that he might be breaking bones.

An officer allows them to join the search, Mary racing after a lingering hoodie-clad man that freezes at her attention. Instead of taking a risk and running, he stays and puts on the classical innocent façade. Mary scoffs at the sight. She roughly scrunches a fistful of the material in her hand and practically drags the protesting man back to the pack of officers, claiming to have found one lurking in the shadows. He is immediately ducked into a police issue car and driven to the nearby station.

John sticks to the area where the car was dumped, dismayed that they find nothing but some dried blood (Sherlock's?) and a couple of concealed weaponry. Uninterested, John catches up with Mary as they head home, promised to be given updates when they have some. Watson is tired, reassured by his wife that Sherlock will turn up, and he was so good at picking out the car and there is no way this can be a coincidence, not with the frightened reactions of the drivers, who were, at first, driving normal speed.

John smiles tiredly, explaining that he just wants to go home and have a nap, regardless of his age. Laughing, Mary takes him upstairs to have said nap, where she stays until dark. When the light returns, there is news.

Lestrade rings John's mobile, whom picks up instantly with an eager ear. Greg informs the ashen-haired man of their discoveries, and that he is free to visit the station at any time to discuss the findings. John nearly runs out the door that second, only staying behind as Mary drags him to the bedroom to put some pants on.

At the station, Lestrade takes them to an empty interrogation room, compiling a file of information he has collected overnight. He looks fatigued, but proud and determined with the new leads that have presented themselves by careless criminals (though he couldn't be more glad that they fucked up).

"Alright, so the guy you found last night worked for Moriarty, and spilled the beans much more eagerly than we expected. He told us that they haven't been allowed to physically see Sherlock, but that Jim definitely has them because they were using that car as a diversion. Somehow James managed to slip away under the false pretense that that was his car." Lestrade begins, scanning over scrawled notes lazily as the information is already burned into his mind.

The Watsons are listening with awe, fascinated that someone so high up Moriarty's ranks would even dare mention his name. Greg also tells them that they found one more of the three men, albeit he refused to speak and had to be lead to a cell upon further questioning. It is at that point that a panting officer abruptly bursts through the door, blurting that one of the guys used his colleague's gun to shoot himself in the temple.

The trio jump up, rushing to follow the officer who recites what he knows about the incident. Inside another interrogation room, not dissimilar to their own lays a man with a buzz cut, face down in a puddle of blood. The carpet around him has absorbed most of the liquid, but bits of debris are sprayed everywhere; it isn't a pleasant sight.

John stares at the corpse, crouching to examine a white patch spattered with crimson, tugging out a note. On the inside of the poorly folded scrap, is scribbled Jim's name _he'll get you, the only way out is through death. You'll never find him, but I wish the best of luck._

The threatening letters of a man's last message spark shivers down John's spine, who cannot even
register the thought of permanently losing Sherlock to Moriarty, especially knowing the man as a wanton criminal who would have zero remorse for any harm inflicted on the detective. Mary understands his upset, grazing his shoulder with her fingertips comfortingly as he keeps his glossy eyes glued to the note. There is no need for the police to confiscate it for further tests, they know the origin and what it means.

So James is still out there, holding Sherlock captive for his entertainment. John knows that's all he wants him for. To put on a show, look pretty and play the part so he can get off on it - or simply because he can. Power-play, Sherlock once mentioned, although he was referring to The Woman: the outcomes are still remarkably similar (having the purpose to do something simply as they have the power to do so). John wonders what Irene would think of this predicament, if she would care and attempt to help or scoff with blood red lips.

Mary ponders what they would do if Sherlock ever returned. He would need therapy, understandably but if he recovered he wouldn't be able to be left on his own, and there will inevitably be mental damage that cannot be repaired, possibly rendering him at least partially dependent. Of course, her and John would take care of him in a flash, she is very much aware of John's adoration for Holmes and she too has a fondness for his being. Perhaps tonight she shall breach that unsaid subject for so many weeks. What happens to Sherlock? John certainly would not trust Mycroft, brother or not. That man is manipulative, and God knows how he would react. The man is already dismissive of the topic, indifferent physically and coping mentally too. John envies that part of him; it, however, would not be useful if Sherlock needed loving attention or sympathy.

So the Watsons go home once again, deciding to stay in for the remainder of the day and contemplate what shall happen if (when, John insists) they find and rescue him.
Sherlock whimpers, attempting to create sound among the equipment and boxed items surrounding him. He is secured to a hook of the wall of the vehicle, presumably there to aid movers in getting in and out of the van. The rapid twists and turns over winding roads send him crashing into the boxers many a time, emitting cries and pain-filled yelps of discomfort from the bound man. Ropes twine tightly around his chaffing wrists, but on the bright side his ankles are free. Sherlock uses this advantage to kick away anything that swerves near him during particularly harsh corners.

Jim and Sebastian are in the front, and at this speed alongside their recognisable faces it's a surprise they haven't been pulled over yet. Holmes feels sorry for any officer that encounters the pair, they'd be a cooling corpse almost the second they exited the car. But that hasn't happened yet, and all is quiet except from the whirl of the engine and the sliding objects invading Sherlock's personal space. He wishes John was around to make a comment, a sarcastic joke or something to make this situation seem a little better than it is. But he isn't here. And he's all alone, being taken God knows where. He didn't even get to grasp where he was neglected in the previous building, and without that knowledge he cannot even attempt to map out their route. He truly is lost.

However, unbeknownst to either of the trio, undercover agents and a group of Mycroft's associates have located the van and are tracking its journey, hoping to catch the men in the act upon arrival. Of course, Jim already considered that approach, and so hatches a plan to...temporarily distract them. Not a second van, but to remove themselves from any radars in their sector until they reach a new destination far away from any of their spying cameras and satellites. Sebastian drives, face emotionless as he follows the directions on the paper Jim handed him. Moriarty completely relaxes, trusting his right hand man to take them to right place. He closes his stormy eyes and snoozes, needing the sleep after hours of planning and packing.

Sherlock cannot rest, too many distractions and discomfort proving worthy enough of preventing sleep. He is so tired, having not slept solidly for months on end. Once sleep was a burden, but after such depravity he craves the stuff. Like he used to crave cocaine. This is harder to hide, though. His once composed self has been reduced to something almost less than human. Even now being alone is terrifying, despite him hating the given company he is forced to endure it's so much of an improvement than being neglected without something to occupy his empty mind. Being thoughtless (well, thoughts that would be deemed important) for such a long period of time has had its toll on him.

He is no longer the man he once was.

Around twenty miles away, John and Mary are sitting in a police station, watching a screen that displays a van used for people moving their possessions to a new house. It is plain, ordinary and nothing like the car caught a few days before. Watson sighs, resting his clammy palm atop Mary's curled fist to calm her. She isn't angry at him, but at authorities that couldn't even work out all the possibilities Moriarty would've thought of. She bites her tongue, settling her rigid spine into the plastic chair and wishing she could jump through the screen and rescue Sherlock straight away.

Mycroft meets with them, an hour or so later, to discuss the procedure. He lists all the considered reactions Sherlock might have during his rescue, such as violent outbursts or terrified weeping. It's typical victim behaviour, we shall become accustomed to this pretty quickly and soon will be able to advance on setting him right again, Mycroft assures, his aura of authority silencing the couple (even John pipes down for once). Holmes explains that Moriarty has probably planned around being caught, and they shall be on their toes with expert teams working to find him - but they're one step
ahead in planning for James to disrupt their tracking signal, they're fully prepared for anything.

And so when the screen randomly goes blank, as does John's heart momentarily, Mycroft provides reassurance that their are trails of men around the area where the van is, tracking it on foot where there can be no interruptions. There are updates every few minutes briefly stating the coordinates and description of the van, although Sherlock isn't in sight it is expected that he has been stuffed in the back. Theories are confirmed when the van pulls up at a deserted country house in Chiltern where nobody would ever suspect there'd be a hostage. Would it count as a hostage? Mycroft doesn't care what title, so long as his baby brother returns safely.

Their meeting is held in one of Mycroft's pristine cars, the cameras shown via an iPad and laptop. Communication is by phone and they are being driven to Chiltern so they can be there to support their loved one. They are forty five minutes into the journey, only needing to travel another fifteen minutes to make it into the village before they have to weave their way through countryside to the mansion James has chosen to now reside in. It's a well thought out plan, one they hope James won't be able to think about because according to him 'everyone is too stupid and practical to be able to work at our level of minds, Sherlock', though John wants to rid the thought of Jim holding Sherlock.

In the house, James stretches, unaware of the spying eyes all over the place, watching his and Seb's every move. He tours the place, grinning at the beauty and how well it will work for him to properly train Sherlock. So close to London too, it's almost a shock that he hasn't been caught out; Jim nearly made his trail easy to find but that would mean the bad men would take Sherlock away and that isn't very good, is it?

Seb has the task of untying a writhing Sherlock, who uses pent-up energy to kick and scream around the gag in his mouth. Not only does he have cloth wedged between his teeth, but duct tape securing it too. It sticks to the occipital bone rather uncomfortably, rubbing his hairless scalp in an almost mocking way. Bright sunlight momentarily blinds him and in that time he has been scooped up and thrown over Sebastian's shoulder. He observes the surrounding, looking up at trees and-

Wait. Is that? Sherlock swallows a cry for help at the scene of a man hiding in a tree, camouflaged and shushing him with a finger to the lips. Holmes feels his heart race, but falls limp and allows himself to be carried inside without struggle, hopeful that he will finally be rescued. Inside, Jim gallops down the stairs with twinkling eyes and has Seb drop Sherlock to the floor. The man grunts as he hits the tiles, curling up and resting his head there as he stares up innocently at Moriarty.

“Oh Will, isn't this wonderful! How do you like your new home, darling?” James exclaims, ripping off the tape and tugging away the soggy cloth from Sherlock's dry mouth. He swallows several times, feeling utterly parched as he cannot seem to collect enough saliva. His throat hurts.

“Er, 's nice, Sir.” Sherlock mutters, not able to make his hoarse voice any louder. Moriarty grins, stroking Sherlock's cheek with his thumb as he inhales deeply. Seb stares absently out of the french windows, seeing acres of countryside and wildlife. Maybe when Sherlock stops screaming at every punishment and he doesn't talk anymore it'll be peaceful.

Sherlock squirms, unsure whether or not he is giving away his excitement. But James knows. He won't tell him yet, though. Let him get his hopes up, then when it all goes to pot Sherlock will be truly faithful, forever knowing nobody is looking for him. He'll give it another day or so. On the other hand, Holmes lies still at last, waiting for orders and feeling cold without Moriarty directly touching him. Eventually James understands his scrunched up face and lifts him up, cradling him as he pushes his head down onto his shoulder. Holmes' long legs automatically wrap around Jim's midsection loosely, so not to hurt him but prevent the burden of his lanky limbs.
They venture to the living room, where Sherlock is left to his own devices for a few moments as a couch is brought in from the van. Jim directs where he and Seb place it, against a wall and central, so Sherlock cannot cower behind or to the side of it like he tried previously back in the old place. At least now it's modern. And clean too. He wants to give Sherlock the best lifestyle, to ingrain dependence on him so the bald man will not want to leave, a form of Stockholm Syndrome, if you must.

The consulting criminal settles into the plush, allowing Sherlock to haphazardly climb onto his lap so he can pet him. Magnificent, teary eyes close shut, as the huge body relaxes against the other male. It takes minutes for Sherlock to bolt up at the sound of several footsteps. His heart stops as the man hidden in the tree approaches, but does not bark demands or have Jim hand over his prisoner. In fact, he just stands there watching the confusion cross over Holmes' face. The other armed troups stay in the doorway, awaiting orders.

And then he realises. Nobody is coming for him. These men work for James, and he might never be found. They aren't going to help him.
Chapter 7

John curses, held back by his wife as he thrashes angrily. Mycroft runs a hand over his face and rapidly types coded messages over the technology available. Mary feels lost, blankly staring at the countryside as she wraps her arms tightly around her husband, restraining him from hurting himself or damaging property and having them fall into a worse situation. He calms enough to be released.

Fool me once, shame on you. Fool me twice, shame on me.

It seems unreal, that they were so close, so convinced that the moving van was their target, it was perfectly described but upon arrival was simply an innocent moving van. So how could James pull that off? They have no idea where the man could've gone, and he already had them convinced the first vehicle was his. To trick them again is almost unheard of, amazing yet terrifying. Mycroft rushes to gather everyone in the car again, informing the driver to take them back to London. There, they could search the area surrounding and hopefully discover answers as to where Moriarty could have taken Sherlock.

John's heart aches, his chest feeling under immense pressure. He barely listens to Mycroft's rambling as vacant eyes gaze at the whizzing trees darting past the window; he almost wants to sink into the seat forever. But he can't. Doing that would mean giving up on Sherlock - his friend needs him whether or not he is here yet. They will get him back, or he will die trying. On the other hand, James is laughing manically as Sherlock cries, begging to be let go and for someone to help him.

The men will not answer him, and he knows deep down that James planned this, had probably tricked John and Mary and maybe even his brother into thinking another van was theirs. He could certainly pull it off. In fact, he doubts Moriarty would bother moving if e didn't want to make some drama. Sherlock has a way of having someone find him, though. Ever so subtly, he presses down on his wrist, aiming for just beside the main vein; he hadn't remembered in all of the fear and pain before that this could save his life. He just has to be careful.

Sherlock is provided with clothes, and the warmth is almost overwhelming. He hides his wrist in the sleeve, concealing a light blue glow that sends sharp pains through the veins. At least it will send a message to John. His phone, however, will also get a message to confirm that the chip is on, so he'll have to find a way to get back the device and turn off the sound or attempt to break (even confiscate) the phone to prevent Jim from becoming suspicious.

In the car, John feels his phone buzz. He would've ignored it in his dismay, but in a situation like this dismissing messages could be disastrous - he could miss out on something. Fishing the device from his pocket, John scim reads the notification from the tracker app. Immediately, he bolts upright to show Mary the message. She gasps quietly, having John rapidly unlock his phone to open the map that shall pinpoint the trackers location.

Mycroft watches, internally confused but externally indifferent. He watches as the couple lean closely to the phone, muttering under their breaths as the device beeps and buzzes after a moment. When it has finished doing whatever it is doing, Mycroft is avoiding a phone being shoved in his face. He scans the screen, eyes falling on a red pin directing him to a section of Surrey.

"Surrey? I would like to know how this is relevant," Holmes admits, looking over the phone with a raised eyebrow. John sighs, tapping the edge of the phone.

"That's a tracker. Sherlock and I had our wrists injected with trackers in case anything happened, only to be used as a last resort. Which means he's in a lot of trouble."
"It also means he's in a lot of pain; activating our trackers sends nerve signals that connect to synced devices - so this notification will also be sent to his own phone." John explains, interrupted by Mycroft.

"So we better be hasty in case they see it and move again." He trails off, staring at the phone in thought.

"Exactly." Mary finishes, asking the driver to punch in the address on his GPS. Soon enough they are on their way, with several squad teams following from different areas. They shall get there within at least under two hours, and in that time, all they can do is hope they can make it before someone realises and pray that Sherlock is okay. John is filled with nerves, tingling with anxiety and struggling to still his restless hands.

Half an hour later, John begins to feel nauseous at the very thought of what Sherlock might look like. He imagines a broken, abused man, afraid of coming into contact with people (although you could say he is already is regardless). Mary boldly promises that whatever state they find him in, he will be nursed back to health by her and her husband, no matter what. Mycroft agrees to contribute, offering the best facilities and care possible for his baby brother; unbeknownst to everyone else he is terrified of the outcome of this rescue mission. Will he still have his pretentious little brother? Or will he be a different man altogether?

In Sherlock's world, he is focused on enduring a severe punishment whilst attempting and so far succeeding in concealing the little blue glow. It should disappear, soon enough, but for now it has to be hidden. Jim either hasn't paid enough attention or he simply ignores the hue, settling for beating the living daylights out of Holmes instead. During the attack, he constantly mutters complaints and reels off names Sherlock cannot recall or identify. Next victims or previous ones, he does not care. They aren't here right now, they can't help him, so why should he bother listening?

"Oh Will, my darling, why can't you just be a good boy and listen to me? I told you this was where we would be living, so why did you have to make a big deal out of it and cry?" James drawls, seeming almost bored with whipping Sherlock's shredded back. Long lashes streak Holmes' back, varying in depth and scars. Old cuts and even scars reopen and bleed heavily, creating a river of crimson down his spine. It pools on the floor, and Sherlock tries hard not to slip and move away - that would earn him an even worse punishment.

The torture doesn't end there. His scalp is brushed roughly, what is left of his hair barely staying on his head with the force. He is still naked, and for that is caned around his uppermost private areas. Screaming and sobbing, he begs in a cracked voice for it to stop, for James to relent and let him breathe (maybe even sleep, if he is generous enough). It takes twenty minutes for the retribution to cease, and even then Sherlock whines in pain. He'd curl up if it didn't hurt so bad. Moriarty sends the men away, keeping Holmes by his side as Seb fetches a bucket of water and a towel.

Sherlock is dragged by an ankle to another room that is blank with only a toilet and drain on the floor. Behind him, a trail of blood smears along the floor and Sherlock fears being hurt again for that. When released, he is allowed to kneel as a bucket of freezing water is poured over his head. His teeth chatter, and shakes off the excess without second thought. Flinching at his mistake, he peeks up at Moriarty who appears to not care as the victim is once again dragged; only this is the small distance to the toilet. Without a second of notice, Sherlock's head is being dunked under the water and kept there as he splutters and struggles, instincts screaming at him to fight.

Lifted up, he has seconds to breathe, this time swallowing up the air as the water flies towards his face. He opens his eyes, scanning the empty bowl for any sign of escape. Instead, he coughs, losing the bubble of air and rapidly growing frantic. His lungs cry for air, but he isn't able to gather any and
spots line his peripheral view. Finally, the water is cascading off his face and oxygen is greeting him, as he gulps the fresh air gladly. Instead of looking up, he concentrates on taking shallow breaths, forcing himself not to swallow all the air. With the short intakes, he is plunged under again, this time not fighting and staying completely still. His brain is tricked into thinking he has more air due to the shallow breaths of oxygen.

This time, he lasts the longest and only begins to struggle after a minute. That is the final time he is sent underwater, for as his body trembles with the cold and water drips from his head. Glancing up at his captors, Sherlock gulps audibly at the sight of a needle-tipped contraption. Now, his head is placed inside the bowl, millimeters away from the liquid and a sharp pain travels down his lower neck and through his spine. He cries out, lifting his arms up to grip the toilet seat firmly, clenching his fingers around the edges to divert the pain. Pain fills his senses, as a scorching brander is pressed onto his back.

Tears fall, dripping into the water that plops up and gets in his eyes, but that is the least of his problems. The pressure on his back dissipates, but not the sharp stinging pain. He can tell what it is, by the sensation and the telltale loud buzzing. All he can hear is that mocking hum and his gasping breaths, that don't help his back. Cuts stretch and open, and the burn sears at every expanding breath. Holmes composes himself, channeling the pain through his grip on the toilet. When he is collected, he desperately slurps up some of the toilet water, unsure when he will next be given an opportunity to eat or drink. Currently, that seems like a long way away. One last movement, and the buzzing stops, leaving the room in an uncomfortable silence. He dares not move.

Moran steps forward, removing the other's head from the toilet and examining the swollen, blotchy face of a crying man. He then turns him, checking out the branded initials and barcode tattoo. Holding the man still, he shoves him in front of Jim, catching him as he stumbles over his own feet. Upright, the man can now watch Moriarty edge towards him teasingly, grasping another glowing rod in his hand. Sherlock can do nothing but stare as the smoking metal sears his skin, screaming louder than the tormenting sizzle of burning skin. It is left there for around ten seconds, then seeming like hours for the writhing man as the metal permanently burns in a brand on his chest, right above the left pectoral.

Eventually, the brander is removed, releasing the pressure and allowing Sherlock to breathe fresh air and blink the smoke from his eyes. Tears stream down his face; he regrets drinking the toilet water to fuel these new streams - and he can barely clear his vision. When he manages to blink away most of the blur he looks down, emitting an uncalled for sob at the sight of the words ‘JIM’S PROPERTY, DO NOT TOUCH’. A mirror is shoved into his face, revealing a reflected image of the burn on his back. This one reads ‘MINE’ and above it is a fairly large barcode tattoo on the base of his neck, forever branding him as simply one of Moriarty's playthings. Fresh tears spring in his eyes, and he bites his lip to contain further crying (by now he has lost the dignity to refuse appearing weak in front of these men).

Sebastian releases his grip, stepping away and allowing Sherlock to collapse on the floor in a muddled pile of limbs and tears. This is it. Sherlock knows he can never escape this. Not even if he is rescued (he could pay for the tattoo to be removed surgically but he can do nothing for the permanent scorch marks that can be seen no matter which way he is facing. They are easily visible too. But that makes him wonder. What are they for? Is there purpose to psychologically bond Sherlock and Jim? Or is it mandatory for whatever sick web Moriarty has threaded for him? Has all this been one big test, to allow them to measure his optimum pain threshold? He can only begin to guess. James is too unpredictable to read.

If he is to be honest, he really doesn't want to find out. He hopes he never has to. Where are you John? I need you, just this once.
Chapter 8

Chapter Summary

theyre getting closer
or are they getting further?

Sherlock vomits up the food he has been force fed. He hasn't eaten properly in at least a week, probably more than that, so being restrained and fed through a tube isn't a great alternative. He just chokes at first, spluttering as he begs for them to stop sending the intrusive plastic down his throat. Then he cannot talk, barely able to breathe in fact. Unidentifiable food is tipped into the entrance of the tube and he cannot do anything but swallow it. However, being solid-based food messes his digestive system; stomach struggling to adjust with such high amounts of solid food entering its linings. It spasms, rejecting the edible goods that will bring Sherlock's energy skyrocketing - but still food is pushed down the tube and clashes with the stuff being brought up. He fully chokes then, thrashing as the world turns dark before his throat isn't being constricted and he can breathe but his oesophagus burns as bile and the newest food is splurging over himself and the slab.

Crying, the man soldiers on, sniveling pathetically, hoping he can still have some food. He is starving; despite being fed morsels of food (enough for him to survive on), it doesn't prevent his ribs from jutting out and skeletal system to protrude. He looks like he suffers from anorexia, and of course he didn't eat that much before but this is torture. He not only craves touch or company now, but food. He begs for it. Jim shouts, maybe hits him once or twice for being selfish. He never stops. Not until they let him have a little to shut him up.

"From now on, it's going to be different." Jim had announced, prior to the force-feeding session. Sherlock stared at his lips, controlling his facial expressions carefully.

"What's happening?" he enquired, daring to peak at Jim's eyes. In a second the man is exploding like a volcano.

"DID I SAY YOU COULD TALK? NO, AND YOU DIDN'T EVEN ADDRESS ME PROPERLY." James bellowed, striking Sherlock's cheek who whimpered, muttering a barely audible 'sorry Sir'.

"Better, my darling William. Now, as I was saying, there's going to be some changes. You need to eat and drinks lots so you can be big and strong, okay?" it's as if he was never even angry, the only evidence being the red hand print etched on Holmes' face. Sighing deeply, the man ordered Seb to lie Sherlock down on the slab for feeding time.

Now he rolls over, avoiding the remaining sick that amazingly missed his body. James sneers, looking at the man with disgust as he utters how disappointed he is and that Sherlock is a pussy for not taking it in his stride like he used to with everything that ever stood in his way. Said man swallows down the retorts of torture and degrading humiliation he has been coerced into. The classical threats of having the handy sniper to instantly murder any one of his small group of companions is enough to make him comply (regardless of the banality of the threats).
A manic laughter fills the room, so Sherlock tries to block the sound out by squeezing his eyes shut and whimpering over the tormenting cackle. He wants to go home, and by home he means off the slab and on Jim's lap. Despite how much he despises the man, he cannot bear being alone. Has he been bad? What did he do wrong? He's done everything Moriarty asked of him; hasn't even thought about touching his new scars because he was told not to. Was it because he threw up?

His reward is a bucket of water sluicing over his body, effectively washing away the vomit and sweat and grime that has built up over the days. Shivering, Holmes quietly thanks them for having mercy and is greeted with a warm towel. A towel! He snuggles into it, nuzzling the cozy material as he is lifted up and held in Seb's arms. Whimpering displays his happiness as Sherlock curls up, peaking through the towel at James, who carefully smiles at him and scrubs at his body to dry him off.

Damp but content, Sherlock does not whine or wriggle as he is carried to the room with the couch, quite willing to sit atop Jim's thighs and cuddle under his chin. The man rubs the scarred back, lulling Sherlock to sleep. During his deep slumber (because he always ensures to take as much sleep as he can get) he is carried to a car, left to lie in the backseat with only a blanket and tinted windows to conceal him. Seb drives, wearing coloured contacts (like Jim) and additional adhesive facial features. You can barely recognise them.

Sherlock awakes part way through, rousing silently and lifting his eyes over the blanket to see the world whizzing past him. He quickly checks for restraints, heart pounding at the discovery of none. When realising that both captors are distracted, he sits up and batters the window with his fists, screaming for help. The car is stopped, and within seconds Jim is out of the car and pulling Sherlock onto the road. He is naked, skin scraping on the tarmac and reopening cuts. Dazed, he adjusts to the outside and cries out loudly, striving to gain any sort of attention. To no avail.

Beaten to a pulp, Sherlock cannot do anything as he is shoved into the boot of the car and watch as it slams shut to encase him in darkness. He whimpers to make the silence go away, tears streaming down his bruised face and revealing pale patches of skin underneath drying blood. His body crashes into the sides of the car at every turn, happening at least fifty times before the vehicle stops. He expects to be dragged out, but footsteps in gravel move away and don't return.

Hours tick by and yet he still hasn't been removed from the car. There is a ruckus outside, and suddenly the man is being blindfolded and relocated to a warehouse filled with chattering people. His body is touched and hit as he is blindly escorted to a hook and hung off it by his cuffed wrists. Dangling, Sherlock has to squint as bright lights invade his vision when the cloth is taken away. He stares in horror at the sight of many other naked men preparing for fights. They growl, most thrashing around in chains but few kneeling quietly, either being fed concoctions of drugs or having pep talks whispered harshly in their ears. He, among three other men, hang, watching for their first time as a couple of fighters step into an arena. They are pushed into the ring, and forced to fight to the death, ensuing an onslaught of blood and screams.

Holmes desperately wriggles, begging to be let go for he shall behave and sit quiet. Jim ignores him, favouring to speak to some of the men that own fighters. They speak of the slaves, then all attention is on Sherlock. He closes his eyes as they advance, twisting his mind to the dungeon in his head as hands fondle his body, sliding up every bump and curve, even venturing to the lower regions as he kicks and cries. They do not stop, not ever. When the hands are gone he opens his eyes to see men in bright jackets and riot uniforms bellowing orders and having everyone standing to get down on their knees and raise their hands. Slaves and fighters alike are escorted out of the building, unfortunately it is necessary that some be sedated before doing so.

Sherlock, alongside the other men, is unhooked and bundled in blankets, transported to a set up
outside milling with officers. And there he is. Holmes nearly collapses, knees buckling under the strain as his vision grows funny. It is all a blur and he is pushed into the arms of two people, crushed by their enveloping hug. He snuggles down, grasping weakly at anything he can find as words are whispered to him delicately. He is lead, half carried to a sleek car and helped inside, surprised by the plush interior. He could fall asleep now. He doesn't, too overwhelmed by the impossibility of it all. *He's going home! He is safe, away from his misery!*

This the best day of his life.
“Ssh, it's okay Sherlock; we've got you and nobody can hurt you anymore.” John says, calmly repeating the mantra until his best friend can form words.

“I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I am so sorry!” Sherlock weeps, shattering the hearts of everyone sitting in the car.

“Sherlock you're alright now it's safe in here.” Mary reassures, rubbing his shoulders to warm him up. He snuggles into her touch, craving the intimacy that doesn't appear to violate him. John strokes his back, staring at the stubbly hair in shock. He glances at Mycroft, who sends him a disturbed glance and leans forward, gently pressing a thumb to Sherlock's cheek.

“William, look at me.” to John and Mary's surprise, he responds by flicking his eyes up to meet Mycroft's soft gaze; the elder sibling is wary on startling his little brother. Sherlock whimpers, leaning into the warming touch on his face that doesn't lead to violence. After a few seconds, he practically leaps into the politician's lap and snuggles up, resuming his crying moments later. “William, I need you to calm down and stop crying for me. Can you do that?”

Miraculously, he does collect himself, sniffing but nonetheless fatigued. His head falls on Mycroft's shoulder and neither declines so it stays there. Sherlock struggles to keep his eyes open but manages to force himself to remain awake in fear that he shall be punished. It's happened before. The eldest picks up on it too, shushing the whining male and settling him with an adjustment to the blanket. Sherlock is not accustomed to having so many events occur in one day, especially with people who are an exception from James and Sebastian. He hasn't seen anyone else, let alone a female, in so long, and everything’s taking its toll on him. John fishes for Mary's hand, feeling much more relaxed when her palm greets his. They watch the encounter, confused at the new title for Sherlock, but now is not the time to ask. If that is the name he responds to - then that is the name they shall use to communicate with him. It certainly gains his full attention.

“William? Can I call you that?” Sherlock looks up at John, seeming alert at the new voice. He nods hesitantly, searching Mycroft's face for guidance, who simply smiles and turns his eyes back to John, his following less than a second later. “Alright William, you're doing so well. Can you tell me if you hit your head anytime today?” John questions, his tone gentle yet urging. He's already examining Sherlock's skull from his position.

“I-I hurt it a little today, i-in the car ride to this place, b-but it was only a f-few bumps a-and it's happened befo-fore.” Sherlock answers, honest and frightened. John grins, an enticing one reserved for mostly terrified children or nervous patients. The other eases at that, growing comfortable in the enclosed space whilst Mycroft wraps his arm around Sherlock’s middle, not adding any pressure that could potentially cause harm or affliction.

“Thank you. Do you feel sick or dizzy? Like a concussion? Or are you just tired?” John fires the enquiries, glad that the questions don't send him into a frenzy. They're going to be walking on eggshells for a while, certainly. Holmes admits he just feels tired, having not slept properly since the awakening in the car with Jim. Again, he is thanked for being so cooperative. He hasn't landed himself in trouble either. This is unarguably the best day ever!

“C-can I sleep?” Sherlock mutters, not raising his eyes further than anyone's abdomen. He is granted permission, told he doesn't have to ask and immediately he lowers himself to the floor, curling up upon the shoes of his family and pretending the stares aren't on him. John clears his throat, and he knows it can only be John because that is a John thing that John does. Now that he thinks about it -
that guy coughs a lot.

Anyway, he keeps his eyes shut and blocks out the hushed conversation from above, wanting nothing more than another hour or so of sleep. He couldn't do so when he was in the boot for all those hours, due to a mixture of discomfort, fear and feeling unworthy; like he failed Moriarty. Noises blur, drowned out by his pounding heartbeat and groaning muscles. Quietly, he wipes away his tears and sniffs, completely absorbed in his pain. How did they find him?

"William, sweetheart, I want you to come and sit with me. Is that okay?" Sherlock jumps, startled by the sudden attention. He wriggles, eyes cautiously gazing up at Mary, who smiles in encouragement.

"We will never hurt you but the floor seems awful cold and lonely. If not painful, too. Come and sit up here and have a nice sleep, hmm?" The reassurance is enough to send Sherlock up onto the seats again, wrapping his lanky, blanketed body around Mycroft's middle.

It reminds the older sibling of their childhood; in the rare moments when Sherlock accepted Mycroft's affection and allowed him to cuddle. They'd sit together, idly watching the scenery or Mycroft would read tales, mostly graphic crime profiles he found online or in magazines (even when both were much too young to be reading that kind of anti-social behaviour). Sherlock would sit on his lap, legs dangling off to the side whilst he rests his buzzing head on the other's shoulder. It seems like second nature to adjust to that position now. Sherlock whimpers, wincing as bruises are touched and cuts are grazed. He does not notice the grimaces on surrounding faces at his obvious pain, too absorbed in the unpleasant sensations to pick up on the sadness and pity.

It's a shame. Due to the lack of mental stimulation and scarce practice, Holmes has become slow, incredibly tedious at registering emotions (whether or not he cared about said emotions is an entirely different story) and observing. Deductions have to mull through a long process as the male patches up his mind palace, enabling him to remain collected at all times, regardless of the situation. Mycroft will help take the reins and show him how to be so brilliant again; he's missed their little games greatly. John has noticed the change too, saddened at the sight of Sherlock so quiet, when once he would've thrived under so much attention and displayed his intellect. The scene before him is almost devastating: Moriarty really has done a number on him.

With only the hum of the engine and warmth of the blankets, Sherlock is lulled to sleep feeling the most comfortable (in every form) he has ever been in the last few months. What is he supposed to think now that he has an opportunity to take his life back? It's all a bit much for so sudden, and slumber seems like the most ideal option for him to ponder the thought in addition to beginning the repair on his mind palace. Externally, he breathes deeply, far gone past REM and settled deep into unconsciousness - it is a relief to all that he relaxes without fuss or necessary assurance. He isn't that broken, then. Albeit, pretty cracked and ragged along the edges. Already the Watsons are planning how to aid Sherlock in the most effective way possible, getting their phones out to note any mental decisions to show one another. Mycroft is too distracted by the beauty of his sleeping brother to be curious at their silent debates, so all is well on the long ride home.

It is dark when the arrive on the outskirts of London, and John is very close to joining Sherlock in sleep. All the emotional turmoil is starting to get the better of him - he's shattered. Mary and Mycroft appear perfectly fine, both accustomed to late nights and pressure or stress build up. It's part of their jobs (well, in Mary's case her previous job). Sherlock has slept the entire duration, stirring once when a fire engine flew past, lights and sirens screaming. Even then he didn't fully rouse. The Watsons have a room ready for Mycroft's younger brother to stay in, insisting he'd be better off with familiar faces - plus John's a doctor and Mary has advanced first aid training. What could go wrong?
Sherlock is wide awake when they reach the Watson household. He is anxious at the sudden reforms, trembling slightly and feeling lost without John's arm to clutch. Mary makes a bowl of soup and some proper food for her and John, unsure how Sherlock's stomach will react to solid foods and not willing to risk damaging any internal organs, or dragging Holmes through any more suffering. John settles him on the couch, wrapping the blanket over bony shoulders and relaxing as Sherlock's head falls on his chest. Small whimpers escape his mouth, eyes scanning the room with curiosity at the new and exciting sights and smells. He hasn't visited the house yet. John hushes him, running a hand over the primitive scalp whilst showing a wince at the sensation. Sherlock is barely recognisable without the luscious long curls that once adorned his head.

Mary hums to herself, tottering about and trying to make herself feel completely relaxed. She wants to be at ease around Sherlock. Doing that requires her to take a few deep breaths, and absorb the reality of the situation. Having the detective home and Moriarty imprisoned for a very long time is an absolutely unfathomable feeling, one she can't quite get her head round. John feels it too, the tingling of happiness, shock of actually having him physically here in addition to the overwhelming sense of dread that Sherlock might possibly be broken beyond repair. They might have to provide care for the remainder of his life, regardless of any underlying disabilities. He could be mentally scarred, could freak out be terrified or lash out. The last is unlikely, in their eyes. He would've attacked Moriarty by now, and he hadn't, will never touch him again, so the Watsons feel safe to say he won't lay a finger on them deliberately.

Sherlock eats quietly, keeping his head down and eagerly slurps up the soup fed to him. He almost whines when there is none left, but instead thanks Mary for her kindness and lowers himself to the floor, never breaking eye contact with the carpet. John glances towards Mary before he sets his plate aside and crouches beside his friend, pressing two fingers to Holmes' chin to lift it up. Sherlock dares to lock eyes, surprised that he isn't chastised for it - rather in contrast awarded with a smile and a stroke on the cheek. Mary smiles too, a wide one that expresses her true joy; and pats the couch to have Sherlock join them again. There's already improvement: Sherlock, though uncomfortably, stays beside John on the furniture and does not try and curl up below them.

This happens for the days after, Sherlock growing more and more confident in the time he is looked after by the Watsons. At first, he cries a lot, finding evermore places to hide around the house. He can barely walk, opting to crawl where he desires and not slowing down either. John has trouble catching up with him, mostly having to think outside the box to even ponder where he could be hiding. Mary finds him behind the wardrobe, laughing gently so not to startle him as he snoozes, body curled up in the grossest way to fit in such a small place. John is worried, and wants to take him to a doctor to check whether his bones have shifted from constantly contorting and remaining in these unnatural positions for long periods. Mary requests to give it time.

Mycroft visits after a week, stoic and affirmative in his posture. It is his usual stature but the powerful stance frightens Sherlock into submission, who begins to cry and sit on his knees with his forehead pressed to the ground. The elder brother is alarmed and in return instantly relaxes his position and lowers to comfort his sibling. The younger Holmes looks up, tear tracks and pouting lips bringing youth to his features. John watches, awed by the sudden softness from Mycroft and feeling warmed at the sight. They hug, Mycroft petting Sherlock's shoulders gently in replacement of stroking his hair.

“Look what I got you Sherlock!” Mycroft announces after a moment, catching Sherlock's attention. Curious eyes follow as Mycroft pulls a ragged looking plush toy from beside him, bundling it into

Chapter 10
Holmes' arms. He stares at in disbelief, and John, as confused as he is, breaks the silence.

“Ooh, that looks nice doesn't it?” he says, speaking as though he is addressing a child. Sherlock nods absently, focused on examining the toy. Mycroft smiles, practically glowing with pride at the acceptance of the plush. Mary joins John in the doorway of the living room, catching the contagious smile at the warming sight. Sherlock glances up, asking something silently that only his brother can understand.

“It's for you, yes.” Mycroft confirms, watching as Sherlock blushes, cracking a fervent grin and hugging the toy tightly. He leans towards Mycroft - practically begging for affection that he receives so graciously.

An hour later, Sherlock is napping, as he finds it difficult to cope staying cooperative without at least a small period of sleep in the day. He takes as much as he can get in fear that it'll revert to what it once was and he shall be refused sleep for days on end. Of course, that will never happen again but what can a mentally traumatised man do? Mycroft has a long talk about Sherlock's progress, deeming it okay to stay with the Watsons instead of a private hospital. However, John shares the embarrassing that the victim struggles with his bladder, often waking up with damp pants or wet sheets. They're glad Sherlock isn't around to hear the conversation; who knows how distraught he would be to listen to such Shameful words?

The night goes on, and Mycroft sees for himself how badly the situation has impacted his brothers clearly unused to witnessing him as such a weak and reserved form - almost unrecognisable if one has known Sherlock for the duration of their life. And Mycroft knows first hand how contrasting this behaviour is to his previous self as a consulting detective. Mary is rather quiet, eyes lingering on Sherlock's tense and trembling body as he attempts to recover from the humiliation of wetting himself in front of everyone; he feels a strong urge to flee. Rather than doing so, he retreats mentally and for the remainder of the night does not utter a word, preferring to keep his head down and eyes averted as John sorts him out, blocking out the intentional reassuring words that do nothing to calm him.

Sherlock leaves for his bedroom once John has finally stopped fussing over him, and is glad to be allowed the privacy. He nods almost curtly in his brother's direction, uncomfortable at the thought of conversing with the older sibling after the earlier incident. The eldest is saddened at the dismissal, but does not share his concern and comprehends the difficulty Sherlock must be dealing with. He is, however, unsure how Holmes can cope with such turmoil and appear to take it in his stride, at least after what he has been through.

Mycroft promises to visit when and as frequently as he can, before bidding his farewells and departs, umbrella in hand. John and Mary relax, checking up on a snoozing Sherlock (who is really just great at pretending) then make lunch for themselves, tired and drained from the stress of it all. They need to see some more progress, but they know how hard it must be for Holmes to delete the ingrained habits James has forced upon him.
Chapter 11

Chapter Notes

So er, hey. I remembered I had several stories I hadn't updated in a while, thinking nobody had bothered to read them in my time away - and then I check out my inbox and it is blown up with comments! So thank you so much for the continued support and I am SO sorry for the delay. I have my final exams this year and will have zero time to write but I'm gunna make a lot of short, progressive chapters so I can update without needing to worry about writer's block!
Again super sorry and I am so happy that people actually want to read this (back when I was fully into writing this I never imagined anyone would wanna read it)!

Sherlock isn't improving in relation to his bladder issue. Mary suggested sending him to a doctor, but unfortunately the victim heard and had a panic attack. John tries negotiating, but Holmes has none of it. The only other option is not preferable to anybody, but it will help Sherlock calm down, not go to the doctor, plus it will keep messes at bay, saving the Watsons' furniture and Sherlock's dignity. At first, Sherlock cries, begging them in a cracked and heartbroken voice to stop, chanting apologies until he finally relents when he realises he has no choice.

“Sherlock, it's not like we're forcing you to. You have a choice - either we take you to a consultant or you wear these, and neither is a punishment, okay? We don't mind which you pick.” John reassures, holding a pack of nappies up. Sherlock whimpers, curled up tightly on the floor with teary eyes. He looks the picture of innocence.

“But I shouldn't b-be wetting myself li-like a child! J-Jim never let m-me use the toilet a-and I had nowhere else t-to go. I'm so naughty, j-just like he s-said!” Sherlock whines, scratching at his scalp; if he had any he'd be pulling at his hair.

“Oh Sherlock, no darling. Don't say that honey it's not your fault!” Mary coos, lowering to wrap the man in her arms. He snuggles up, desperate for the contact in his emotional state. After a moment, he looks down and makes his choice.

“Nappies.” he mutters, refusing eye contact, suddenly finding the floor rather interesting. John thanks him, promising to only use them during naps or at nighttime. That enlightens Sherlock some, although he is still pretty dejected about it all. Luckily there is no further discussion and he is left to cuddle his ragged toy, a teddy bear dressed in a pirate uniform with a matching eye patch, not too dissimilar to Pudsey bear (with the exception of the faded maroon faux fur).

Later, at around two in the afternoon, Sherlock struggles to keep his eyes open, tiredly adapting an oral fixation by sticking his little finger in his mouth. He does not suck it, quite comfortable simply having the appendages presence there. John gathers up a nappy, lying a whining Sherlock down on his back and shushing his protests. Identically to a parent, he compromises, asking Holmes to cooperate if he wants to end it sooner. And, like predicted, once he has quietened, still albeit teary-eyed, John is hasty in changing his regular underwear in exchange for the nappy.

Luckily, when Sherlock cared not for his body image, he'd often burst out of the bathroom or in when John occupied the room, ending in cries of surprise and low growls. Since John has had his fair share of naked Sherlock, his short experience during changing doesn't phase him at all, although
Mary respectively leaves the room to allow them privacy, especially considering it's Sherlock's first time. After the endurance, Sherlock is up and on the couch, already sleeping fitfully (he's more than shattered today). His nap lasts for a solid two hours, and upon awakening they discover that he has indeed wet himself again when battling nightmares.

John makes no comment as he guides Sherlock to the floor and onto his back, smiling warmly as he gets to work in removing it and switching it for some boxers. They're Sherlock’s, but are now baggy due to the malnutrition and lack of food alike. The bear is back, this time concealing Holmes' eyes from the ordeal and acting as a perfect comfort item. Mary is there afterwards to feed him pieces of banana, all the while praising his bravery and excellent behavior. In the week or so that the detective has resided here, the Watsons have discovered using huge amounts of praise and affection is the ticket to gaining trust. Clearly Sherlock thinks highly of them, looks up to most people now and is desperate to please and impress, so unlike his old self.

So they know when he is low, or having a moment, the most suitable thing to do is walk him through it with plenty of affection and proof of their satisfaction towards him. Sherlock snuggles closer, eager to finish the portion so he can cuddle with this new motherly figure and forget about all his worries. John busies himself with other tasks, wanting Mary to build up a bond with Sherlock. Over the week they have noticed the petulance Sherlock displays, and have turned to Mycroft for advice. He has suggested therapy, or coaxing him into adult behaviours (albeit he cannot stress enough how slowly they must take everything) but the couple have decided against it, and instead want to embrace the characteristics in hopes that Sherlock shall be able to recover faster if he thinks he has been accepted for the way he is.

Moriarty has certainly done a number on him, that's for sure. But they can un-train him, if you like, from what has been ingrained into his mind for so long. He can gradually open up his mind palace and hopefully grow to be the consulting genius detective Sherlock Holmes, with the incredible ability to instantly deduce your every move and being altogether. He will be stitched back together, piece by piece if necessary. And so if Sherlock is desires to be a child, then he shall be treated so accordingly.

Mary enjoys cuddling with Sherlock - she's surprised at how relaxed it is to just...exist beside him. Now that he isn't deducing her every move and calculating her next breath, she can truly appreciate him as he is. It's very contrasting to her previous self; in the time that she had no mercy or a caring pocket in her body. After meeting John, being exposed for what she is and now showing affection for more than one person is astonishing. John too, as bewildered as he is to have accepted Mary's past and altered it, believes it to be quiet fascinating that she could have a change of heart, loving two people (though only the latter being a genuine lover, the other more of a friendly, motherly relationship).

Sherlock itches badly. He cannot battle the constant nagging from his nerves to scratch his torso vigorously until his skin reddens and his fingernails leave angry track marks in their wake. Clothes are something he is still accustoming to, after periodically laying bare as shivers tackled his spine and tingled his flesh. The cold can't nip anymore, the warmth too strong and domineering - and he is glad. But the issue here underlies in the material, albeit soft it becomes rather a nuisance as is abrades his tender skin continuously, as if even the thread is nagging at him to strip and kneel.

He fights that itch, squirming in discomfort but refusing to discard what has been given to him: he should be grateful someone has been so considerate and allowed him the right! Mary notices the subtle wriggles, feeling the diminutive muscles contract and flex every so often as hitched breath is released in chopped clips. John shares an equally discombobulated look, eyes scanning for any form of injury whether internally or externally. Finding no symptoms of either, the ashen haired man approaches to crouch at Sherlock’s level, ensuring to make noise so the other does not startle.
“Sherlock what's the matter?” John questions, searching the dull eyes for any indication. Sherlock sighs carefully, raising a hand to scrub at his chest.

“Clothes itchy. Off.” is the explanation. John opens his mouth in realisation, watching Holmes dig his broken nails into the agitated flesh painfully to scrape at the itching. Mary tugs the hands away, having John under soft command remove the item and set it aside to inspect the tint spreading across the torso. There are a few dashes here and there, but most extensively the crimson blooming where the material has rubbed - somehow causing mass irritation.

John gets stuck in, pulling Sherlock up by a clasped hand to lead him to the bathroom to apply emollient cream to soothe the skin. It has a cooling effect, and the globs of relief have Sherlock sighing again in contentment, uncoiling muscles and allowing John to massage his hands over the itch, on occasion scratching the less tender areas. Mary searches for a replacement shirt, discovering that unfortunately, the comfiest and softest in the house was the one he had on. She runs a hand through her short hair, rummaging inside the furthest niches of John's wardrobe to find anything suitable. She returns empty handed.

Sherlock shrugs upon the failure of finding something else, preferring to remain shirtless if it means his skin will shut up with its whining. The tingling has subsided, the deep itch staved off. What remnants of discomfort left are being reduced by the rapid cream that soaks into his skin and makes it feel pleasant to the touch, if a bit oily. A dust of a smile graces John's lips at his handy work, permitting Sherlock to leave the bathroom so long as he continues his cuddling session with Mary - something he is both eager and willing to do.

It is noted how greatly he improves, but what cannot be ignored is the childishness of his movements, from the way he stumbles in fatigue, rubs his eyes with curled fists, or clings to his stuffed bear like a protective toddler. Perhaps the way he acts as though he needs the Watsons to take care of him, cannot function without their supervision. The pondering thought drifts along the edges of John's mind, floating to the front at the trigger of an action of a tone of voice Sherlock produces that would have never been uttered or performed by the old Sherlock. Maybe he shouldn't have to be an adult anymore. Well, maybe not quite yet. It is a topic that shall need to be formerly discussed among his wife and Mycroft, possibly even enquire for Lestrade and Hooper to participate (and even Mrs Hudson, the mother hen and professional fuss-er). But that's for another time. Baby steps, remember?
Delicate teacups clink quietly as they are transferred around the table and to their respectful saucers. Mycroft perches on the end of his seat elegantly, carefully sipping at the hot beverage as John explains what he has briefly shared with Mary. There is no expression on the politician's face, although he does focus his attention fully on John and appears to be listening intently. Mary too watches John, intrigued by the idea the more it is discussed. Watson has really done his research. His in-depth theory appears well thought out and he clearly knows what he is talking about.

“I am enthralled, indeed. What got you thinking about this?” Mycroft contributes at the end of John’s speech.

“Well Mary and I have witnessed first hand how well Sherlock responds to acceptance and indulges in childish behaviours. It had me wondering whether it would benefit him to just go along with it, you get me?” John answers, glancing at his wife. She sends him a smile that he relaxes at, eyes landing on the door to Sherlock’s room. He’s currently napping, having tired himself out with a Sudoku puzzle.

“It would certainly succour him. Have you sources to the necessary materials?” Mycroft replies - he looks excited, some. His body has, ever so slightly, propped up higher. John nods, watching in slight confusion at the perplexed expression (Holmes is surprised that Watson has gone into so much detail and trouble during his researching). “In that case, I would prefer if you gave it a try and see how it works in the long-term.”

John is elated. He sends a polite smile, all the while containing his true happiness, whilst Mary subtly squeezes his hand. Mycroft stands to depart, then requests to see his brother. Upon permission, he heads towards the room with an aura of sophistication and noiselessly opens the door. For a moment, he remains in the doorway, before surprisingly entering. John shares a concerned look with his partner, then they briskly follow to see. Inside, there are soft sounds of weeping. Mycroft takes calculated steps towards his sibling so not to startle him, heart clenching at the pitiful sight.

“Oh Sherlock,” Mycroft breathes, balancing as Sherlock leaps towards him for comfort. The younger sniffs, voice muffled by Mycroft’s shoulder as he grips the jacket tightly as if letting go will make him disappear. John despairs; he feels completely useless to help his friend in these kind of states. The
Watsons back out to give some privacy, and upon hearing Sherlock calm down they reenter to see him falling back into slumber.

Mycroft stands and advances, turning back as he exits through the front door to say in an earnest tone, “Do what you must.”

Days later, Sherlock is having a great day. By now, he is inseparable from his plush toy and has taken well to wearing nappies and accepting them when he has to sleep. He barely even protests when they are changed either - Mary is gradually contributing too so he grows comfortable with them both. He trusts John, and has started to allow Mary to help him out a lot more than he previously did; when she was his cuddle buddy. Mycroft demands updates everyday, and John is glad to give them. On the odd occasion, it has been agreed that Sherlock shall spend an hour at least once a week skyping Mycroft if the politician is out of the country or cannot visit.

With the permission, John spends some time online shopping for adultery yet babyish items. He starts off simple, looking for soft and warm clothes in the period that Sherlock will not leave the house (the farthest he's ventured so far is the patio in the back garden, and even then he could not last longer than seven minutes), as well as cute pajamas and onesies - they seem to be the fashion lately and John has found the perfect pirate-themed one. Mary has suggested buying a packet of dummies to try them out too, and John deems it a good idea, so he adds a pack to his basket alongside another plush toy. And of course a few packages of nappies (they can never have enough).

Sherlock is completely oblivious, but he does try to keep up. He's into reading, absorbs books and googles things like there's no tomorrow. John knows how hard he's trying to get back to his old self, and can see the frustration when Sherlock often has to take a moment to deduct or struggles to work out what is going on. Sometimes he cries in anger, but he is never violent. Not after what those sick people did to mess his psych up. And although John, Mary and Mycroft are more than happy to care for Sherlock - even as taboo as their way is - they still find it awful that things have amounted to this. None of them want this, but everyone knows Sherlock needs it more than anything of they want their detective back, regardless how long it takes to build him up again.

Their items arrive within the next two months, slow batches of orders gradually making their way to the front door. Sherlock hasn't lost his curiosity, and is eager to sidle up beside John and Mary as they unbox items and store them away. Sherlock begins to notice the new clothes they pick out for him (it's a stressful responsibility and the man becomes anxious when he's given a task that has a particular choice), and though he doesn't seem to mind it's clear he is working out what they're doing. But he accepts the onesies at night and wears the comfortable clothes (they are actually quite soothing). John has privately asked his partner when they should introduce the more...abnormal items.

"Sherlock? Can you come here please sweetie?" the curly haired man slips off the couch, lying his book there face-down to save the page as he idles into the kitchen towards the other two occupants.

"Hm?" John has noticed that sometimes Sherlock prefers to use noises rather than words; it is quite alarming since before the incident Sherlock could never be shut up. But if it keeps him calm John can make do.

"We want you to try this out for us - it's completely your decision as to whether you want to continue using them, alright? We will not be angry either way, I promise." Mary says as she holds out a dummy, cleaned and only just out of the package. She didn't want to keep suspense and frighten
Sherlock, and she finds his expression unreadable as he examines the item.

They expect him to nervously flit between gazes, maybe shuffle his feet or quietly refuse. Instead, to their surprise, he carefully plucks the dummy from Mary's grasp and slips it into his mouth with a few experimental tugs. John subconsciously leans forward in anticipation, eyes never leaving Sherlock's face as he stares back, unwavering and confident. Success. He doesn't spit it out, but hums again and sucks some more. Mary smiles, a contagious one that spreads over to Sherlock's lips behind the plastic guard and over to John's mouth too.

"Is it okay? Better than using your yucky fingers, eh?" John says. Sherlock is now happily suckling away, hands lacing together to tug at his own shirt as his feet overlap in shyness.

"Mmhm," is the belated response, before John rubs his shoulder and sends him back to his book.

"Better tell Mycroft."
Chapter 13

Things have been going really well in the Watson household. With Sherlock finally settled, forming a routine is a smooth process and everyone adapts rapidly to it. Unfortunately for Sherlock this means early bedtimes and strict meal times, but the itinerary helps remove some fear that he will be left alone for hours to his own devices. At least with this routine someone is always there to look over him and ensure that he feels safe - it doesn't go unnoticed and the man tries his best to show his gratitude. He loves cuddles, and that's mostly how he displays how grateful he is, especially with the lack of words being uttered from chapped lips. There are barely any arguments too, which is a nice change from the usual stubborn Sherlock, however hints of his old self arise from time to time. The steepled fingers are returning when the brunet is deep in thought, a perplexed expression etched on furrowed features. Sherlock is even becoming comfortable enough to tell his surrogate parents/carers 'no', although it takes a lot of guts and tears ensue afterwards when the man expects punishment. It is also a new thing that Sherlock cannot bathe, not due to physical hindrance but because it triggers terrifying panic attacks. At first, when Sherlock wasn't as aware, he would cry and wriggle but for the most part be rigid and have the process occur as quickly as possible. Now it is something he simply can't endure out of pure, unadulterated fear.

The first time it happens, it takes both John and Mary to restrain and console Sherlock, who thrashes, screams, cries and scratches - desperate to get out of the tub. He does not show any means of communication for the next hours to come, regardless of the extensive cajoling on John's part. The attack is so sudden and unexpected, that it takes an hour of convincing and bribing to get Sherlock in the bath again. By then, he smells something rotten and his skin is almost grimy, groin forming a rash due to the lacklustre washing (there's only so much a wipe can do).

Eventually, Sherlock allows himself to be placed in the bath, and follows up the routine rigid posture and blank eyes. However, the second John touches his scalp to wash the growing stubble atop there, all Hell breaks loose. Sherlock flinches, and in his wide-eyes shock begins to cry in earnest, afraid of the hands but craving touch and reassurance. Within seconds, Sherlock is raising his hands to pull away the offending digits on his head, then tries scratching away the phantom feeling of the razor buzzing against his skin. It's all in his head, and John struggles to remain calm as he pushes Sherlock's hands away and controls the wrists in a single-palmed grip.

John calls for Mary as he drains the tub of water, shouting for her to bring a second towel and some clothes. Minutes later the woman stumbles into the bathroom, witnessing the height of Sherlock's panic attacks. His face is drained of all colour, his eyes are wide and spilling tears like a gushing fountain, teeth grinding as he screams through his teeth. The hands in John's vice-like grasp yank in desperation to be released as the skinny body writhes relentlessly in attempt to follow instinct and hide. Mary begins commentating her actions, asking rhetorical questions much to her partner's bemusement. Sherlock seems far too gone to be registering what she is saying. "Keep talking, even if they cannot understand you," she explains, "the sound of your voice can be enough to pull them back."

John nods, and follows suit, telling Sherlock repeatedly what they are doing and what is going to happen. Sherlock likes knowing what is going on. He and Mary keep talking, even if John finds it a little silly at first because he knows his charge cannot understand them, but starts to notice the calming effect it has on the man. Sherlock gradually settles, eventually his body stills and he stops resisting John enough for the latter to release his wrists. Mary keeps talking, rolling out a mantra of
praise and commentary to allow Sherlock to register his surroundings as his mind finally clears.

"M-Mary?" the woman smiles, stepping forward so that she is in Sherlock's direct line of sight. She
doesn't want to frighten him anymore than he already is.

"Hello sweetheart," Sherlock whimpers. Mary swipes a thumb over Holmes' cheek, wiping away
tears and tilting her head as Sherlock subtly nuzzles the hand.

"That was a scary one, huh?" her voice is incredibly gentle, a low timbre that is nothing but
comforting and calm to fully pull Sherlock back to reality. Said man nods, sniffing as he turns to look
at John.

"No baths," he states.

"No baths." John confirms. They need to source the root of this soon before it deteriorates.

Half an hour later, Sherlock is dressed in pyjamas and a fresh nappy, cleaner than he was before.
John will take anything he can get at this point, and he's just glad he managed to wash his charge's
body before the panic attack. The grime is gone for now - but now they have to work out how to get
the man cleaned with the least stress as possible. Showers trigger worse panic attacks - with the
distraught man begging for mercy despite it being warm water on a low pressure setting. The
Watsons wish they knew what was going on in their dear Sherlock's head. For now, Sherlock just
wants quiet and cuddles, which both are happy to dish out. The trio currently reside in the master
bedroom, with Sherlock snuggled up in the middle of the double bed, a Watson either side of him.
He's sure he's never felt safer.

Over the next few nights, Sherlock manages to sit in the tub, with about an inch of water, and can
tolerate ten minutes before the panic starts to set in. Sherlock still isn’t willing to talk much, only
providing single worded answers and hums in response to questions. Though there has yet to be a
repeat of the attack in the bath, there has been a drastic increase of nightmares. There's a minimum of
two a night, which majorly concerns everyone. Mary has given up on decent sleep at this point, and
gets up in the night to assist Sherlock so that John can rest and go to work. Though impractical, it's
the best they can do until the nightmares relent.

Sherlock is often as exhausted, (though mostly more so) as Mary, and they find themselves napping
together during the day. Nobody has been paying enough attention on Sherlock's frequency in his
toiletry behaviour. In other words, he is quite alarmed one day to realise he's wetting himself without
even noticing. He confides in Mary with teary eyes and unable to properly communicate he can only
sit and wait for his surrogate mother to catch on. It's utterly frustrating but Sherlock cannot seem to
get his words out - he feels like someone has his vocal chords in a choke hold and he can't articulate
more than single words.

It takes almost an entire day for Mary to realise, when she notices that Sherlock has been having a lot
of accidents during naps. John clicks on when he comes home from work to Sherlock's full nappy
despite it being an hour or so since his last change, and when the man begins to have accidents when
he isn't wearing his nappies it becomes clear that there is an underlying problem. To be on the safe
side, everyone agrees that for now, the nappies are going to have to be a permanent fixture in
Sherlock's life until they can work out where this sudden lack of control has arisen from. Yet another
issue that they need to research before it worsens and causes serious or irreversible damage.

Mycroft is informed the evening of their discovery, and requests to visit the next day to discuss the
issue face-to-face with his brother and the couple in attempt to get to the bottom of the problem. The
panic attacks are also a vital subject if they want these problems to be fixed before Sherlock goes insane. Mycroft is unsure that he could cope with both of his siblings locked away. John agrees, glad that it is the weekend so he will not be absent at work during such an important discussion. Sherlock listens with wide eyes, head on John's shoulder as he sits on his lap, legs sprawled over Mary's.

"M-Mycroft," Sherlock whimpers. He leans up towards the phone in John's hand and listens as his brother greets him. "Mmm-Myke, mmm."

The room falls quiet as Sherlock tries to communicate, but he can't do much more than hum and call for his brother. It's obvious that he is incredibly frustrated but there isn't much they can do to help - he'll have to find his voice himself. John strokes his hair, reassuring the man that his sibling will come over in the morning to talk everything through. Sherlock deems this acceptable enough, and lays his head back down with another hum. Mary supplies a dummy, which he takes happily, closing his eyes to hear the low rumble of John's voice through his chest and the steady heartbeat as Mary strokes his legs comfortingly.

The morning approaches quickly, and it's time for Mary to go wake her charge. She leaves John to have a lie-in and get some rest as she trots down to Sherlock's room. He's still fast asleep and unwilling to wake up as Mary gently shakes him, but he whines and rolls away, stuffing his face further into the pillow. "Come on mister, you gotta wake up now!"

"Noo!" Sherlock protests, trying to shrug off the shaking hands. To no avail, as Mary pushes on his shoulders to roll him onto his back.

"Up, come on, you can nap later." Sherlock shakes his head vigorously. John stumbles into the room, grunting his good mornings as he strokes Sherlock's head as he passes and kisses Mary.

Within minutes, a small bowl of fruit is being devoured by Sherlock (he still has trouble eating completely solid food, so soft fruit and yogurt is the best for breakfast). He hums contentedly, swinging his legs as his feet graze along the floor. Mary is glad he feels calm, as it means he probably won't fuss when getting dressed. John stumbles into the room, grunting his good mornings as he strokes Sherlock's head as he passes and kisses Mary.

"Oh god, bad breath get away!" Mary jokes, pushing her partner away. Sherlock giggles, bringing a smile to both of the couple's faces.

"Do you think that's funny do you?" John teases, edging closer to Sherlock. The brunet giggles again, smacking a hand over his mouth as he shakes his head.

Mary chimes in on the fun, "I think he does, you know," John hums with a nod as Sherlock eyes them curiously, suddenly alert and waiting for what's going to happen.

"Did you know that the sentence for giggling in this house is tickles?" John pretends to ask Mary, who feigns a shocked expression and looks over towards Sherlock, who squeals and squirms in his
"Oh goodness, I guess we better get on with it then!" Mary sighs, acting as if she doesn't want to do it. "I'm sorry Sherlock, but rules are rules."

"N-Noo!" Sherlock snorts, pushing his chair away and standing, ready to bolt at any second. He looks delighted, and even he is going along with the joke as he pretends to be scared, raising his hands and backing away.

"Sorry Sherlock," John echoes, dashing forward to grab Sherlock. They both laugh, with Sherlock yelping in surprise as Mary grasps his legs so he can be carried to the living room (it's safer with the carpet and couches).

Within seconds the room is filled with loud squeals of laughter and begs as Sherlock tries his hardest to wriggle away from the sneaky fingers, that are deftly running across his ribs and feet. John finds it too funny to stop, but he's ready to cease fire any time he feels Sherlock has had enough. Mary is completely enjoying the reaction she earns from scratching the soles of Sherlock's feet with ghostly touches, eliciting more squeaks and screeches. John suddenly holds Sherlock's wrists in his hands, pulls up the boy's shirt and blows a huge raspberry. If they thought the man couldn't get any louder - they were wrong.

"Ahh, stop!" Sherlock cries shaking his head as he laughs. When that doesn’t work, he goes for an instinctual tactic that he hopes will set him free. "Dada no!"

John stops immediately, wide eyed and stunned to silence. His mouth falls agape slightly, and with a chuckle Mary closes it again with her finger. Sherlock giggles, sitting up and wriggling away before turning to Mary, "He's silly mama!"

Now it's Mary's turn to be shocked, taken aback by the sudden name and unsure if it because Sherlock is falling further into head space or because he's finally completely comfortable with the couple. Either way, it is an unexpected but pleasant surprise. Sherlock watches them both, suddenly anxious and unsure if he has said the right thing, and that he hasn't upset anyone. He hums, gaining their attention once more as they snap back into reality.

"Oh my God, Sherlock!" The latter jumps, just slightly, expecting retribution for his troubles. He is wrong. Rather, he receives an onslaught of cuddles from his surrogate parents, something he is not much accustomed too from his biological caretakers.

It is the beginning of a good day.

Not that much later, Mycroft arrives with a grim smile and a box of Heroes for his younger brother, having decided it would be nice to treat the boy for being so well behaved. John ushers the elder sibling into the living room where Sherlock sits, restless and excited to see his big brother. A squeal erupts from his lips the second he spots Mycroft, and it's refreshing.

"Hello, little brother." Mycroft greets, bracing himself a second before he has an armful of happiness.

"M-Myke!" Sherlock is buzzing, practically vibrating with joy at the sight of his brother. He isn't sure why he's so happy, but he likes the feeling - somewhat new after so long being in devastation.

"We'll leave you to it." Mary adds, pushing John out of the room.

Mycroft allows his brother a moment, before ensuring he settles. He has already been informed about
this morning’s developments, and he wants to ask Sherlock what exactly is going through his head. They sit on the couch, the plush toy held tight in Sherlock’s fist, who suddenly feels anxious for the conversation ahead. He doesn’t quite know how to get his words out, not with the silence that has been ingrained into his mind under Moriarty’s conditioning. Mycroft runs a hand over his brother’s cheek to calm him, noting the way the other pushes into it. So he still craves affection.

"How are you feeling today, brother mine?" Mycroft asks. E ease into it, he thinks.

Sherlock nods, pausing as he forces his mouth to work with his mind. "O-Okay, th-thank you,"

The stutter is beginning to become a problem. It may need to be assessed by a professional, if it deteriorates. "What have you been up to this morning?"

"Playin’ w-w-with mama ‘n’ dada!" The underlying excitement in Sherlock’s tone and wriggling body brings a smile to Mycroft’s face. He falters, remembering that he must address Sherlock as he would a child in order for this to work.

"That sounds fun, do mama and dada make you happy, Sherlock?" How strange it is not to be called William, thinks Sherlock. He reminds himself not to get distracted when someone is talking to him - it’s incredibly rude. This time, he acknowledges the question with a grin and a nod. It is the most he can muster.

"What else makes you happy?" Mycroft lowers the volume of his voice, to see if Sherlock will copy.

"Mmm, R-Redbeard, ‘n’ Mykey, ‘n’ playin’, mmm ‘n’ rea-readin’ ‘n’ dummy." The sentence is just comprehensible, but Sherlock is ecstatic at managing a whole answer and he thinks about everything that he is grateful for.

"That is wonderful Sherlock! Okay, now, what makes you sad, little one?" Mycroft lowers his voice again to a whisper, as if this is secret, hoping it will relax Sherlock enough to open up.

At first, there is silence, as the boy looks like a deer in the headlights, then there are near tears until Mycroft assures that he does not have to say anything he doesn't want to. Sherlock wishes he could tell him that he wants to say it all - he just can’t. After a while, Sherlock takes a deep breath, and as a tear slips down his cheek, he answers.

"N-nightmares. Bad -men, hurt, hurt, bad, bad, bad!" Sherlock's breath hitches, and he takes a second to bring the teddy to his face as he composes himself. Then he continues, much to their disbelief. "M-Moriarty, bath, hurt, t-table ‘n’ el-electri-tricity, naughty boy, Will, n-naughty!"

Mycroft, in a brief moment of panic, intervenes with the oncoming panic attack, drawing the younger close and rocking them until Sherlock can catch his breath in between sobs. It breaks Mycroft’s heart. When the noise settles some, and the elder thinks Sherlock will be able to hear him over the sound of his own crying, he pulls the male back to stare into his eyes.

"Sherloc, shh, it’s okay. You're not a naughty boy at all, you're such a good boy! The best little boy there is, in fact. I know that myself,“ It seems to be working - Sherlock quietens as he listens, entranced by the soothing voice and kind tone. Mycroft goes on. "I'm so, so proud of you for being so brave and telling me all that, and we can use it to push all those bad thoughts away, hm?"

Sherlock nods.

"Okay, that's enough for today I think." What Mycroft doesn't expect is the small whine of complaint and the sake of a head.

"M-More," Sherlock tries to say, hoping his brother will realise that he needs to get this out now
whilst he can. He already feels lighter.

"You have more?" Sherlock nods frantically. Mycroft hesitates, but if Sherlock wants to open up, then he isn't going to stop him.

With the go ahead, Sherlock pushes through the whirling thoughts in his head. "Ba-bath time, so c-cold 'n' d-drown. Hurt, Mykey! T-took m-my hair away, s-sad. No more drow-drowning, p-please?" Mycroft's heart shatters a little bit more at the request, but he hides it with a gentle smile.

"Sweetheart, nobody is ever going to hurt you again, I promise," Sherlock raises his baby finger hopefully. "Pinkie promise, okay? Your mama and dada just want to get you all clean, and Moriarty will not be able to touch you ever again."

Sherlock seems convinced and satisfied, sniffing as the evidence of his crying dries on his cheeks. Mycroft pulls his little brother into his lap, long legs draping over the rest of the couch as he is seated against the man's chest - Redbeard going with them. The older sibling takes the toy, replacing the item with a dummy to Sherlock's lips, as he begins to tell the story (that he creates on the spot) of Rebeard; the greatest pirate in the world, and some of the adventures he goes on. Mycroft animates the story by using the toy as a visual, and Sherlock fully immerses in the tale, contently sucking on the dummy as he snuggles back into the warmth. He's proud of himself.

Mycroft can't wait to share the news.
Chapter 15

Chapter Notes

The timeline for this story is slightly altered from the canon TV version, so bear with me on this one.
If you've watched the final season you might be slightly confused, so hang tight and I'll explain at the end.
Merry Christmas everyone!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

"Mycroft, who the Hell is this Redbeard figure Sherlock keeps talking about?" John enquires one rainy day. Sherlock hasn't stopped muttering about someone - or something - with the name Redbeard, but any time he's asked Sherlock seems confused as to who the name belongs to, aside from his toy.

"Ah, well. That's particularly complicated," Mycroft says. John blinks for a second, before gesturing for the elder brother to continue. "I'm not quite sure how Sherlock remembers him - but Redbeard holds a lot of trauma."

"He doesn't actually know who Redbeard is, can't quite place it when we ask, that's why we're curious, is all." Mary adds. Mycroft nods, eyeing his sleeping brother on the couch not far from the dining room table. The man is too deep in slumber to be feigning or listening in, so Mycroft deems it safe to explain.

"When Sherlock was really little, he had a best friend. They played pirates together, hence the name Redbeard. We...have another sibling who was rather troubled...to sugar coat it." the confession stops the couple in their tracks.

"Wait, what?" it's the only response John can muster, watching the man with disbelief as the usually composed figure clears his throat and shifts ever so slightly. Mary leans forward, excited to hear the history of the Holmes family.

"To cut a lengthy story short, we have a sister who currently resides in a maximum security asylum. She killed Sherlock's friend - drowned him in a well to be more precise. Little Sherlock was so distraught that his brain altered the memories so that Redbeard was now the family dog that went missing. That might explain the confusion - his older mind must understand that Redbeard is a human but his current mind is struggling to comprehend the altered memories." Mycroft finishes, taking a sip of his hot beverage as he observes the couple from the rim of his mug.

"Right. But he still calls his toy Rebeard?" Mary iterates. Mycroft shrugs, claiming that it must hold some sentiment or other to his brother.

"I think it would perhaps be beneficial for Sherlock to visit his sister - to ease him out of the house. He's always preferred crazy characters; not to offend you of course, so who better than Eurus?" Mycroft suggests. The parents are hesitant at first, but finally John speaks up.

"How far away is this asylum?" Mycroft shifts every so slightly.
"Few hours in the air," John sits back, scoffing as he shakes his head.

"No. No way!" he protests. Mary placates him with a hand on his shoulder, eyeing Mycroft.

"I'm not sure such a long journey would help anything, Mycroft." Mary replies, sighing quietly as they ponder what to do.

"I can arrange a private jet so that he does not have to go through the bustle of airports and strangers. It does not have to be an immediate journey." Mycroft adds, though he is unsure if the couple will agree.

John pauses, then nods his head. “It’s worth a try.”

Mycroft smiles slightly, already planning the trip and deciding who to contact. Mary quickly asks whether the siblings will get along. The elder brother hesitates, admitting he has no idea – the pair have not been in contact since they were really little.

The rest of the morning is spent planning a trip to the asylum, all before Sherlock rouses at noon. Mary fetches the boy, bribing him with a visit to see his brother in the kitchen. The younger sibling lurches up, bouncing on his feet as he is guided out of the room clutching Mary’s hand.

Upon uniting, Sherlock jumps onto his brother’s lap and snuggles up close, grunting slightly in contentment. Mycroft huffs as the breath is taken out of him but he rapidly adjusts to allow Sherlock a moment to relax. John smiles but he gets Sherlock’s breakfast ready. The house is quiet.

The next few days are the calm before the storm, and the small family are preparing for the couple-day trip. Mycroft has already arranged everything, ensuring that his sister has been behaving well and that there are no problems revolving around the reunion. Finally, the day arrives, and Sherlock has realised that something is happening, and feels nervous, despite having no clue what is going on. The pair sit him down on the couch early that morning, keeping the atmosphere calm and relaxed as they inform their adoptive son of the situation.

At first, the boy cries, frightened beyond belief at the thought of leaving the house for so long. With the reassurance that he will never be left alone, and that John and Mary would be there the entire time, he relents and accepts. With scarce fuss, Sherlock is dressed in comfortable traveling clothes and bundled into the private jet – the boy is quiet with anxiety.

“Sherlock, are you okay sweetheart?” Mary asks, cuddling her son close as he strokes his hair. He soothes, allowing a few tears to slip as he shudders.

“Sherlock, love, look at me.” John says in a soothing voice, trying to remove all tones of an imperative out of his voice so that Sherlock knows he is not mad.

Sherlock raises his teary eyes, looking plainly terrified. Mary presses a kiss to his temple, and the couple realise that this could quickly turn into a traumatic experience. John smiles gently, easing himself closer to the boy.

“You’re being such a good boy – we’re so proud of you for being so brave and agreeing to come with us.” John says, reaching out to tuck the beanie adorning the man over Sherlock’s ears.

With a sniffle and a careful blink, the boy stops crying and settles, still eyeing his surrogate father. Mycroft arrives, having spoke to the pilots, and sits beside John, somewhat more relaxed than his usual stoic appearance for the sake of his brother. “We’re setting off now, so put your seatbelt on
After the mandatory safety video, the pilot announces take off and Sherlock weeps again. As the plane begins to speed up and move into the air, the brunet wets himself, thankful for his thick nappy as his nerves are soaked up within seconds. Mary notices immediately, but waits for the plane to settle in the air before she quietly asks Sherlock if he is alright.

The first hour is almost silent, with everyone finding their own way to entertain themselves as Sherlock settles for a short nap, having found the experience so far exhausting. A dummy replaces a soggy thumb and the younger brother is out like a light for an hour and a half. However, the inevitable subconscious thoughts of where they are going awakes Sherlock. He whimpers.

“Hey, hey, it’s okay, we’re right here.” John thinks it’s another nightmare, emerging with the ritual they use to settle the boy after a frightening dream sequence. Sherlock raises his arms in silent request and finds himself deposited in his father’s lap instantly, curling into the smaller frame for comfort.

The cuddling is short lived, for only fifteen minutes later the pilots announce touch down and ask for the passengers to take their own seats and apply their seatbelts. The disruption of Sherlock’s cuddling session is taken badly, with crocodile tears and a whole lot of tempting with toys and food. He calms, but only until they land and he is back to crying, knowing in such a short time he will meet with someone that may make him or break him.

No amount of soothing, bribing and trying stops Sherlock, so soon enough everyone ignores the child for sorting themselves out, ready to exit the airplane. John carries the boy out, thanking the staff for being so considerate (even if he is sure they are on a hefty payroll for this particular ride) and plops his son into a taxi seat, climbing in seconds later to another lapful of a tearful man-child.

A twenty-minute ride, panic attack and security check later, Sherlock is finally guided by Mycroft to a locked-down section, where his sister is held. Mycroft only ventures as far as the entrance, not moving out of the lift as his brother takes a careful step forward, trepidation obvious in every shift. Eurus does not turn, her back facing the wall of her cell, but instead acknowledges the new arrival using her violin.

The music becomes faster and has a warning tone when Sherlock (who is in awe of the player, briefly recalling his own skill with the instrument) comes too close of the glass, and steps away accordingly as the music changes tone. Mycroft exits when he is assured there is no possible way that his sister could hurt Sherlock, with a reassurance that he is watching and ready to come back when necessary.

Sherlock is alone. He can scarcely hear the music over his own thumping heartbeat, the blood rushing through his body coursing adrenaline. Crouching, the boy plonks himself on the floor to listen to the music, almost forgetting why he is here.

“A-Are you my sis-sister?” Even now, he cannot break past the stutter, formed by his fears, but the woman does not seem to mind.

“Oh Sherlock, you always were the youngest, even if not biologically. Come here, let me get a closer look at you,” The voice of the woman is smooth. She lowers her violin as she turns, and oh. She’s pretty. Sherlock doesn’t quite remember her looking like that, but then again, she was still in pigtales and pinafores last time he saw her.

The voice beckons him closer, inch by inch, step by step. He stands at the warning line, hovering, uncertain at what may happen. His sister reaches her hand out, and he crosses the boundary, but when nothing happens he is encouraged to stand right next to the glass.
“Good boy Sherlock. See? I knew you could do it,” Eurus seems so kind. Sherlock likes her. He reaches his hand out, ready to place him palm on the glass. But. Wait. What?

Instead of meeting glass, there is nothing. Eurus grins like a shark, and Sherlock whimpers at how similar it looks to Moriarty’s. without hesitation, Eurus grasps Sherlock’s hand and yanks him over to her, standing flush. It would be wrong for them to stand like this as normal siblings, even worse now that the man doesn’t quite understand the undertones it pronounces.

Alarm bells go off, but the lift seems to malfunction, and being the only entrance to the room, the staff, Mycroft, Mary and John panic, everyone rushing to break in. Eurus is incredibly calm, almost soothing Sherlock as he covers his ears to protect from the shrill noise.

“Sherlock. Just look at you. Do you remember me? Do you know what I did?” she asks. Sherlock stares at her for a second, his arms falling to his sides.

He knows. “You killed Redbeard.” No hint of a stutter.

Eurus grins again. “Clever boy, but who was Redbeard, little one? Who did I kill?”

Sherlock thinks. Though at first his answer is the family dog, a series of flashbacks warp his vision, making him stumble. Eurus doesn’t try to catch him as he sinks to the floor, pulling his knees up against his chest as he begins to cry. “You killed him! It’s your fault!”

The sister tilts her head at the sudden screaming, though there is no sign of alarm or acknowledgement. She just asks again. “Who did I kill Sherlock? Come on, I know you’re still in there, clever boy. Why don’t you come out and play?”

“My best friend! He’s dead! Your fault! Bad, bad, bad!” he shouts, voice louder than the alarms that cease in his panic. More flashbacks, of his childhood, of his torture and kidnapping. Of Moriarty.

“James really did a number on you didn’t he? We never thought you would break quite so much, I’m almost impressed.” Eurus states. Sherlock looks up.

“Y-You know?” he asks. His sister tuts, crouching next to him, swiping a thumb across his cheek.

“Oh Sherlock, we planned the whole thing together, him and I. Such as shame he’s not around to give me updates, but this is even better. Now I get to see you for myself, little boy.”

Sherlock’s vision whites out, breathing erratic, limbs twitching. Can’t breathe, can’t breathe. Can’t breathe! Someone starts screaming. Is t him? He doesn’t know. Too much. Can’t cope. Need to get out. Where is Mycroft? He wants his mama and dada. No no no!

A violin plays, albeit it sounds distant and muffled. Sherlock’s hands are over his ears, he does not realise, but Eurus plays. Her music is soft, but varies between sharp tones and gentle, almost lullaby sounds. She doesn’t try to help her brother. The lift restarts. It is hectic from there.

The building goes into further lockdown, herds of security guards bustling in to restrain the patient, watching as the boy is dragged out of the room by Mycroft, unaware of the situation and terrified. John and Mary are waiting for him, and it cues a thirty minute calm down whilst Eurus is dealt with.

Needless to say, Sherlock is never seeing his sister again.

Chapter End Notes
Okay, so on the TV show John and Mary have Rosamund, and as gorgeous as she is, she doesn't fit in this story (sorry Rosie). However, the Holmes sister is canon in this, although the whole death shenanigans don't happen here. What happens in this story is canon only for the sake of the story. Make sense?
I couldn't find a way to add Rosamund into the story whilst Sherlock was living in the house/needed a lot of attention/acting like a baby etc. So in here, she doesn't exist (even if John and Mary still sleep as if they are new parents).
Chapter 16

Chapter Notes

Here it is. The finale. Enjoy.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Later, when the Holmes and the Watsons are well away from the asylum, Mycroft asks what Eurus said to him. Sherlock refuses to speak, having been mute since his conversation with his sister. Unbeknownst to the man, Mycroft has the security footage that tells them exactly what happened, but he wants to see if his younger brother will open up about it first.

The oldest Holmes sibling had gone back to speak to Eurus just after the incident, questioning her intentions. Her answer was horrifying. She told her brother that they needed to be careful. A storm is coming. Moriarty will return, and he won’t be stupid this time.

You mustn’t fight it, she had said. He is too powerful; whatever happens, you must accept. Do not try to disturb him again, or there will be consequences.

Sherlock still does not answer, and instead put himself down for a nap, unwilling to communicate. He also refuses to leave the Watsons side, instead resting his head on dada’s knee and sprawling his legs over mama’s, so that if they move him he will wake. He is restless. There isn’t much they can do.

When the boy eventually falls into a deep sleep, they play the videotape, all eyes glued to the screen. Silence ensues when the tape finishes. So she had planned this all along. She knew they would go to visit her. Moriarty was not alone, even now. The thought is frightening – and they cannot afford to lose Sherlock again. That would be game over.

The next week is extremely scary, with Sherlock particularly on edge about his family’s peculiar behaviour. They will not leave his side, and they’re currently residing in a strange house in a strange place, far away from their home in London. He hates it. What is happening? He’s frustrated that nobody will tell him why they are here, and a string of panic attacks has the parents fearing the worst. They happen anytime and anywhere: in the kitchen, when John drops a knife on the floor, in the living room, when there is a loud noise on the TV, and in the bath, when the flashbacks become too much.

John and Mary initially arranged for the therapist to visit the new place, instead hiring a new one and having their original send over their notes. It prevents Moriarty from tracking them as they have no connections to any previous therapists/doctors and the like. It scares Sherlock and he loses the ability to speak for a few days, having regressed further in his fear. No amount of cajoling is enough to placate the brunet, who finds himself recoiling at all the new changes. Swapping his therapist is one of the worst things his parents could have done, and Mycroft has a heated conversation over the matter a day after they update him, when they think Sherlock is napping, albeit he was in fact listening the entire time, silently crying at the raised voices and hoping he isn't punished for being the source of the argument. Phantom electric currents course through his body at the mere thought of retribution.

Despite the loss of progress on Sherlock's part, there arises good news. Moriarty is finally discovered
hiding away in a dingy hotel, somewhere he would never normally be found (and it isn't even that clever), but he is immediately arrested and taken to the police station, where his trial is arranged. They cannot afford to let him go - they would never find him again and it would be soul destroying for the Watsons and their child. It would mean they could potentially be on the run for safety until James is found.

They manage to detain Jim for a grand total of three days, before he is missing from his cell during the morning call. The news spreads like wildfire; the family being one of the first to hear about it, and it means all stops have to be put out as precautions, including hiring guards for outside, never leaving the new house and keeping strict contact with Mycroft for any updates, who uses his power to scavenge any security camera and public telephone he can. To no avail. Moriarty seems to have fell of the face of the earth again. Nobody knows how Moriarty could have managed to escape, as the last footage of him recorded is him smashing the CCTV camera in his cell with his bare fist. It almost seems impossible.

The couple do everything they can to reassure Sherlock, and decide to not tell him what has happened and what is going on, in fear that he will break more than he already has. It is unacceptable to let him slip through their fingers if they can help it, so it means that Sherlock follows the new rule of always been a minimum and maximum of one room away from either one of the pair. As long as Mary or John can see/hear him, he is permitted to stay in the room and entertain himself. It works, and no problems arise - the reduction of panic and tension means that Sherlock can relax, assuming whatever the problem was it has been resolved and they are (somewhat) back to normal. He adjusts to the new surroundings and takes the new rules in his stride. Even the majority of the panic attacks and nightmares seem to dissolve.

Another update, this one occurring just under a week after Moriarty becomes modern-day Houdini, concludes that the police find one of Jim’s men. Upon questioning the man, however, he panics and steals the officer's gun, only to shoot himself in the head, refusing to speak of Moriarty and his network. The man, right before death, claims he wants nothing to do with this and he never even met the man - only having contact with an anonymous associate. After that, there is radio silence. Nothing happens for a week or so, and there is no sign of James anywhere, despite many police searches. He has fallen under the radar, and there is nothing they can do about it.

Mycroft visits his sister again and she tells him that Moriarty is coming and there is no stopping him. There are no more words on the whereabouts of Jim or his intentions, not that Mycroft would expect her to know much else, considering she has been under strict lock-down since her disturbance with Sherlock. She simply repeats that Moriarty will visit them again, and that she advises they accept what happens. It is the same spiel as the one after the incident, and leaves Mycroft with a solid headache. Eurus’ final words are a request for Mycroft to send Sherlock her love, because he’ll need it. It causes a big scare at first. And then.

Nothing happens for a few weeks, and upon a month after the visit to the asylum, it looks like they are safe. The fear dies down at last and Sherlock (blissfully unaware of the war around him) is sat using his dummy, legs crossed as he hums calmly - he's having a good day, and has yet to face a panic attack. A book is held lightly in his hands, the soft breeze from the open backdoor soothing. He can hear the comforting sounds of Mary pottering around in the kitchen, and then the careful footsteps of John outside, approaching the couch from behind. Sherlock hums louder, shuffling, restless. Being cooped up for so long is boring him and he just wants to go outside, but the Watsons are still being so careful - refusing any sort of venturing outdoors until they're sure James Moriarty is gone for good. He doesn't know that, and thinks his parents are being mean because he was naughty during his visit to his sister.

All seems well, and now John is behind him, but Sherlock is bemused that he doesn't greet him or
stroke his hair like he usually would. Before he can turn around, Sherlock hears John shouting Mary from upstairs, and as he freezes, paralysed in fear, still unable to speak, the hair-raising Irish lilt next to his ear whispers, "Oh William, what a naughty boy you've been."

Chapter End Notes

I'd like to thank everyone for being so nice and supportive (we're all fucked up together, how cute eh?) despite the few unexpected hiatuses. Now this story is over, I'm working on finishing my other story, and may possibly begin a new one. Stay tuned folks, it's another Sherlock one!
The ending is ambiguous so that you can decide what happens, it would be nice to see what your takes on the story are, so perhaps leave a comment with your opinion. Much appreciated! And goodbye for now!

Please [drop by the archive and comment](https://www.ficarchive.com) to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!