Miss Molly Hooper
by daisherz365

Summary

Medical student Molly Hooper agrees to tutor the young ward of the mysterious Sherlock Holmes in this modern retelling of Jane Eyre, but something is amiss. What is Sherlock hiding? Who is this boy who reminds her of someone she knew as a child?

Notes

Hello all!

This monster has been about two years in a making and I'm so happy to finally bring it from out of her hard drive for all to real and enjoy. That is my wish.

However, I must warn you of a few things that might be difficult to swallow for some.

1) This is not a direct retelling of the loved book or film. I was prompted this AU about two years ago on tumblr in the following way: "Could you do something Jane Eyre-ish with Molly as Jane Eyre, Sherlock as Mr. Rochester?", and I believe I've taken that to heart and molded it into something I'm really proud of. Ironically though I had planned to do this AU before I ever got the message. It just gave me the proper channels to do so - a request.

2) TRIGGERS: Fire. That's it.
I would also like to thank my dear beta Danae for sticking by me and giving me the fuel to keep this train going even after I had to ask for an extension because PLOT. You are amazing, and I would love to work with you again. Thank you for helping create this baby just as much as I did fleshing out the details. I owe you so much.

Finally, any places that were mentioned were researched to the fullest extent by yours truly using their official channels (i.e. websites) to learn more and put it into words that I hope you understand.

With that note I give you the Sherlolly Jane Eyre AU!

<3 day

PS enjoy this wonderful artwork that was made for this fic here

It’s a Sunday afternoon when she gets the call from a woman who called herself Mrs. Hudson. She was calling on behalf of a man that was all over the papers. She heard whispers on a daily basis about a Mr. Holmes. She didn’t know his first name but he was an enigma apparently. He had a place in London and that’s as much as her knowledge on him went. She only read the papers for the science articles and at times the cultural section but she tried to shy away from anything that spelled out “this is tragic”, she knew she would get sad about it and want to find a way to assist. It was in her nature.

Mrs. Hudson was his landlady but also did a side project of trying to help him and the little boy who lived with him. No relation, she insisted but Molly had already had it in her head that he might be some kind of relation to the man. She didn’t know why but why would a man look after a young chap if he wasn’t someone important to him. That was really all that matters though, that he genuinely cared for him. The boy’s name was Miles and he was struggling in the sciences and mathematics which is where she came into the picture.

Mr. Holmes apparently had her name on a list in his office. He was out at the time and Mrs. Hudson had gone to clean up a little in his upstairs quarters and found her name along with a few others. The others had been a lost cause, she said. They either sounded too involved in wanting to get to know Mr. Holmes or didn’t know how to handle a child. Both, were not things that gave the older woman a good feeling so in a word, Molly was her last hope.

“I’m currently working and finishing up exams but I can try to work around it if that’s okay?” Molly had not been as willing to go out into other people’s homes let alone answer a call from someone she barely knew. It just wasn’t right, but she liked children and didn’t see the harm in trying to help a young boy with something that she was passionate about.

“I think that would do just fine. We’d only need you to come a few times during the week to help
him with his studies. He’s entering a summer program to help with it but the boy needs a little more help if you know what I mean.” Molly smiles from her side of the line. Nodding to herself. This wouldn’t be the first time she helped someone who was struggling.

She shut her eyes a moment.

“Dear, are you still with me?” Mrs. Hudson called from the other line. A memory had filtered through her mind of a girl with ginger hair that was wild, her smile was one of her favorite things about her. She had been sweating and talking about all the good things she wanted her to do without her there. Molly bit her lip as she blinked away tears and replied. “Yes, sorry. I do understand what you mean. Um,” She pauses as she tries to refocus on what is going on now. She had a question she had to ask. Oh, right. “What will the payment be like? Sorry, this is a bit weird. I have to work a little more for necessities and what have you.”

She can hear the smile in the older woman voices as she quells her concerns. “Much more than you’re currently getting working at that lab? Mr. Holmes is quite invested in the child’s future so he’d be willing to compensate your time in any way possible.”

It still sounded a little strange but she decided she needed to see something for herself before committing to this offer. “Would be alright if I came by to meet the boy before deciding anything? It sounds like a good offer…” She trailed off before Mrs. Hudson cut her off again, affirming the idea that she understood what she meant. “I’ve lived in this place for over thirty years now and even I can see that it can be a little strange to be around some things and people. It could put your mind at ease a bit, I hope.” The woman chuckled which only made Molly that much more anxious about this.

They settled a time and a date for Tuesday at three. Miles (as she had been told was his name) would be back from a day at school around that time. It was the perfect time and Molly had agreed to it so it wasn’t like she could back out of it. She was hoping it eased her mind a little bit. It did sound good.

If she hadn’t been so intrigued by the way a life ends she was sure she could have been a proper teacher for little children. They found her amusing. She was okay with that. Hopefully Miles was okay with her too. She also hoped that he wasn’t too much of a hassle. She knew she would be able to manage but still, boys could be difficult. She had experienced with all of it; young and old.

She let out a sigh as she jotted down the information in her little notebook that she kept in the kitchen on a magnet attached to her refrigerator. As she looked around she realized again just how small the place was, not that it bothered her. She’d been here for about three years. It was all she could afford for herself and she didn’t mind but she felt excited about seeing some other places. Some place almost guaranteed to have things that she had never seen unless she was in a museum.
It was also a short term job, she reminded herself.

For the next two days she thought nothing of it. It was on the calendar but she had a last bout of studying to do for one of her last exams plus work which took over about ten hours out of the two days. It was still routine and she enjoyed working for what it was worth. She had always gotten looks in the lab because it was known why she was there even as a two year analyst. The job she was hoping to get down below was not sought after by many people at all, it made her seem stranger. She had learned a long time ago to brush those kind of ill thoughts away from her even if she could hear them. People would always have something to say, you were better if you focused on what you needed to do and not what they thought about you. It was hard some days but she managed just fine.

She finished off her last exam for the week on Tuesday morning and spent the rest of the time doing minimal tasks at home before getting dressed. She wore a simple outfit: a simple white blouse with a red cardigan and dark trousers. Her feet fit into her flats just nicely and seeing as she didn’t exactly want her hair down she pulled it back into a ponytail before heading out the door with her bag over her shoulder. It wasn’t a spectacular outfit but it wasn’t like she was going a date of any kind. She was going to meet a woman and a child who was seven years old.

She made sure to pocket the address even though it wasn’t too far away from where she resided already. She could walk, and she did. She didn’t have the fare money for a cab so she didn’t mind much. Exercise was good. She didn’t get enough of it unfortunately, but with summer approaching perhaps she could try for a few more walks and if she spent enough time with Miles she could ask him to join her. Kids liked being outside, didn’t they?

It took Molly about twenty three minutes to get to Baker Street. There had been an accident on one of the streets she would have usually taken to get there quicker so she was slowed down when having to decide on a backup plan for the routing. She made it there in one piece, thankfully.

221 Baker Street. That was the address. There was a B on the door but she could tell by looking that there were many more places inside of it. She grabbed the knocker and swung it three times against the door before looking around. The sandwich shop next to the door was busy with customers going to and from it. She smiled at that. Perhaps afterwards she could get a bite to it, if it wasn’t already offered to her. Mrs. Hudson sounded like a lovely woman over the phone.

It took a minute for someone to come to the door. When it was swung open she smiled at the woman who was in a violet dress. She beckoned her in. “You must be Molly Hooper, Miles is washing up for a snack. He’ll be down shortly to meet you and greet you. We can sit in my flat until he comes down.” Molly nodded while following her to the first door she saw. She had spotted the stairs that led up to another door but she didn’t have much time to really look up there.

Mrs. Hudson left her to sit on her floral couch as she went to get a few things from the kitchen. She
thought she’d like a cuppa and a few finger sandwiches. She was talking to her while she prepared such things. “I hope it wasn’t too far from where you are staying.”

“Oh no, I was fine walking.”

She heard a gasp coming from the kitchen which made her want to see if something had happened or whether or not the older woman needed her to come help her with anything. When Mrs. Hudson returned with a small tray of finger sandwiches and offered some to her she realized it was not anything to worry about. “The kettle is on now, but why did you walk here?” There was worry in the older woman’s eyes. It took her a moment to realize that perhaps the woman was a worrier by nature.

Molly took a sandwich before saying anything. “Oh, it wasn’t that far and I didn’t have enough for a fare. It wouldn’t have been much but I have a budget and bills to take care of. I was fine, I promise.” She tried to soothe the woman over. It didn’t feel like a big deal to her, but maybe it was to other people. She was used to finding alternate ways of dealing with her obstacles. It wasn’t a serious thing for her.

“I can promise you that when Mr. Holmes returns he’ll more than likely be wanting you to take a car at least.”

Molly blinked, took a moment and chewed on the small half of the sandwich before saying anything else. She wasn’t sure how she felt about that. She had done just fine not going along with people for years, it wouldn’t do to change it just because someone who was in a way going to be her employer at least financially wouldn’t approve of it. She’d have words for him.

She didn’t have to discuss it now though, for a little blob of blond hair peeked through the open door of Mrs. Hudson’s flat. “Come on in, dear.” Mrs. Hudson called before moving to greet the boy. He was fairly short for a boy his age but Molly thought he did seem to care a little curious eye that she knew was customary for younger children. She smiled at him as he came into full view.

He had wavy blonde hair that kind of bounced a little when he walked. It hit his shoulders at an angle and he had muddy brown eyes that were an interesting contrast to his hair and the tan of his skin. He had a short sleeve brown shirt on with khaki cargo pants on. His feet were bare of shoes. Molly gave him a curious look at that. He looked at her too as he twisted his fingers in front of him. “Miles, this is Molly, she’s possibly going to help you with your work. The sciences mostly. Say hello.”

“Hi.” He said shortly, she thought he was going to turn around and rush back out the room only he
moved forward and padding over to the couch where Molly is sitting and hopping up beside her. ‘You know about sciences?’

Molly nodded. ‘Probably a bit more than you do. It’s fascinating.’

He made a noise of disagreement, but he didn’t really say much more. Molly wasn’t sure what to say to that for a moment so they were quiet. Mrs. Hudson had head back into the kitchen to grab the tea as the kettle went off. Miles eyes were straying off to the kitchen. He didn’t look too interested in much.

‘Perhaps I’ll be able to make it easier for you. I know a few tricks.’ She mumbled while making a little gesture with her hand. It got his attention anyhow. He turned back to her.

‘What kind of tricks?’ Molly tried not to laugh. You talk about tricks and a boy was immediately interested.

She told him about one of the experiments that they might get to do. It was a safe one but it was also quite fun. ‘Mr. Holmes does things like that but more dangerous – flames erupt and odd smelly things. I’m not supposed to be in the room when he does that but he doesn’t mind. Mrs. Hudson doesn’t like it though.’ He told her quietly as the woman in question came back into the room.

They both accepted cups of tea. Molly requested milk while Miles had two lumps of sugar in his. ‘We getting along okay?’

Miles looked at Molly as if to say, ‘Do not tell her what I said,’ and Molly just nodded at the landlady. ‘Of course. It think we will get along just fine.’ She sent a wink to him that made the boy get a little red in the face. Interesting, she thought.

Molly sat with them a little longer before looking at the time. ‘I’m sorry, I didn’t see what time it was. I must be going. I’ll see you a few days, Miles.’ Molly promised, she would come back in another two days so that they could get started. Miles decided to walk her to the door even though he couldn’t exactly go outside. He hadn’t any shoes on. ‘I’ll see you on Thursday.’ He told her with a smile before she left him with a small wave and closing the door behind her.

She let out a small sigh of relief as she slipped into Speedy’s and grabbed a small bite to eat. She was still a little hungry. There wasn’t much in her fridge. She made a note to go to the market soon to fill up again. She thought of the little boy who just a door over and a few steps away and she smiled.
She had a feeling it would be an interesting time spent with someone younger and new to things like this. Maybe she’d share a few stories of her years at the boarding home with him. He seemed to like things like that.

When Thursday came Molly realized that she wasn’t entirely sure what Miles would be working on. It stumped her on what she should bring with her. She wasn’t going to be there a terribly long time but that didn’t mean that she shouldn’t take a few resources to aid him and her along with his studies. She was fairly new at this type of occupation. She spent her days in the library or the lab working on basic things but there were a few times when something exciting happened. This new job wasn’t supposed to be anything like that. It did interest her.

It wasn’t like she expected anything special to take course over the next three months but it did hold promise.

She ended up tossing some of her material that she had kept from school in her bag along with a few little odd ends that could serve as some sort of visual representation. When she found herself helping a younger person before, they found it easier when being able to look at things in a perspective. Little things could help.

She didn’t spend too much time on it and soon was on her way back to Baker Street. It didn’t feel like it had already been two days since she had made her first trip there. She had kept busy, yet here she was again with something more than a nice sit down with Miles and Martha Hudson. It almost made her feel a slight shift in what was expected of her.

She sighed as she knocked on the door. Miles opened the door quite quickly making her think perhaps he had been waiting on her. She brushed the thought away as she followed his bouncing bright hair up the stairs to where he resided. As she slipped through the large door Molly had to come to a full stop. It was so eye opening.

While she had been expecting some kind of grandiose furniture this was roughly still baffling to her. Fancy wallpaper that lined the walls of the front room that seemed to double as a sitting room. Two chairs and sofa fitted against one of the walls. A bookshelf against another. She swiveled her view to the small opening nearest to the bookshelf where it looked like a madman’s kitchen sat. There was a large table that hadn’t the room for anything except what lay cluttered on it.

Miles noticing the look on his tutors face smiled a little before trailing back over to her and grabbing her hand and taking her in the opposite direction of the madness. They were going down a hall that was barely lit but the boy seemed to know his way around it. After passing three different doors he pushed open a door that was sitting ajar and relief flooded in when she realized that this had to be one of the most spacious and de-cluttered room that she had seen so far.
She was afraid to think of what the other rooms looked like in comparison.

“Your room?” She asked as he let go of her hand and climbed onto a chair that was tucked under a fairly large mahogany desk. It comforted her a little to know that Miles was being looked over well enough. Not that she had much doubt. She was still learning what to expect when it came to this job. It seemed as though, so far she had little to worry about.

He gave her a little nod before opening up a notebook that was sitting on it also. She peeked over him to see what it was exactly. “So, long division today?” She paused a moment looking at the red markings over the sheet that he was having to rework as practice. “Okay, wait a moment.” She turned back around seeing a large chair sitting the corner.

She almost wanted to ask who used it seeing as the boy was much younger and albeit too tiny to fit in it unless someone else joined him to fill it out. Instead she quickly grabbed it, seeing that it was better to get started than to dally any longer. Miles seemed to want to as well.

“The best way to handle these is to do it one section at a time…”

She stayed two hours only, before Mrs. Hudson came up with a piping hot tray of food. Two servings of a casserole that she had been slaving over downstairs. She didn’t say so but Molly figured that anything that smelled this good had to come from quite a bit of work. She almost declined the offer but her growling stomach had been enough for her to stay.

They put Miles’ work to the side despite the fact that they were just about done and dug in. Usually Miles took to the living room at the table to eat if Mr. Holmes didn’t have space clear – Molly mentioned that it wasn’t safe for him to eat around hazard chemicals. Mrs. Hudson replied to that it wasn’t always so bad. It depended on his work ethic which she was finding entail quite a bit of experimenting. She decided that perhaps if it appeared soon, she’d have to talk to him about that.

You could be a mad scientist without all the mess. She was almost scared to touch any of it, so she shan’t until she felt comfortable with or he told her it was okay. Or so that’s how it was supposed to be.

“We will work on some of your sciences the next time I come over. Alternating is good, yeah?” She gave him a smile as he once again walked her to the door. He was really a well-mannered boy if a bit quiet.
Though she figured that’s because he wasn’t totally sure what else he was supposed to do with her there for a specific thing. They would have fun too, she thought.

He surprised her before closing the door, “Thank you, Miss Hooper. For helping.”

Molly giggled, on her way down the steps. Fun, indeed.

-

There had been a stillness in the air of the large flat that Molly had been occupying with the small child that she had been helping for some weeks now. She had felt it almost immediately but tried not to give off the fact that she wasn’t nearly as afraid as most people would have been. She also didn’t find it completely wrong that she was curious about the man who was the sole tenant of this entire floor of the building.

She hadn’t seen him yet. Nor did she fully expect to but she couldn’t help but wonder what he was up to. What could possibly keep a man away from his house for so long? What kind of occupation could he have? Mrs. Hudson; the kind land lady who was more than accommodating when she first arrived had merely said that he was off running about probably getting into trouble. It was a habit of his apparently but she wasn’t too swayed about this.

As far as she knew - this was the way of nearly all men. They constantly were up to their sleeves in muck. This meant little to her even if she had been surrounded with so little of them in her years in and out of the boarding home for children and young women. She had many memories of stern faces and anger by them as well. As a result the absence of the master of this particular place did not give her any peace. It just made her mind wonder.

There were such odd things filling the place. Skulls on the mantle and foreign liquids on the counter tops that she wasn’t supposed to touch. That she was partially still unsure if she wanted to touch of fear her skin would be scorched to blackness.

Her need for cleanliness had gotten to her a bit today while little Miles was going over his passages of notes and the lesson that he had been sent home with today. She went about the kitchen creating a little order to the different volumes of glassware and cleaning up when she saw things knocked over and spilled.

She could only thank heavens that there was proper cleaning solutions and diluted substances to aid
her in this task. By the time she had moved to cleaning the stack of dishes that was compiled in the sink she got a rude awakening. Well, perhaps not entirely rude. More like a shock.

"Who are you?"

She dropped the plate she was working on clutching her wet hands to her chest as she fell against the counter top. Her other hand had instinctively grabbed the knife that was sitting in a wooden holder. It was large and lethal if used correctly. She knew how to use one – though he was probably unaware of this, she thought.

The man before her had the look of a gentleman but the look in his eyes and the blood sliding down his temple gave her the indication that this was not so. “You’re bleeding.” Was the first thing that flew out her mouth. Not her name, not an actual excuse for why she was cleaning up his mess. It was a reaction that she found often when people were hurt around her. The worry was something that her father always said would get her into trouble. There was only a handful of times as a girl that she could say that it was true. Her father had been wise.

The man only pressed a finger to his head before seeming to realize that he was in slight pain. “So it seems. This would probably move a lot quicker if you put the knife down and told me what I’d like to know.”

Molly complied slowly all the while not taking her eyes off the tall man with the wound on his head. “Molly Hooper.” She coughed, “Sir.”

He seemed to take in this information, nodding. “You must be tutoring young Miles. Doesn’t exactly explain why you are in the kitchen…” He trailed off. His eyes never wavering as he continued a second later, “Touching my things. For future reference don’t do it. I have an order to the way I like things.

Messing it up will only make me dislike you and cause discord or chaos.” For a brief second she could have sworn she saw a flit of a smile of some kind of his face but it had vanished so quickly, like blinking.

She knew he expected her to comply with him without another word but she turned from him taking the wash cloth she had been using to clean the dishes again and muttering as he begun to stride out the room. “For future reference, Mister Holmes I wholly expect a little more order for this is not it. Dear Miles needs a little less distraction when he needs to focus on his course work. Having a room in disarray won’t help matters. I prefer cleanliness, just so you know.”
She heard him scoff but he didn’t say anything else. She took that as a sign that he might have actually been listening or perhaps she might have botched up his expectations of what she was to be whenever he was around.

He was highly displeased and that should have made her worry. The fact of the matter was this: she was used to disappointing others. She didn’t exactly have friends to speak of. She had one but she was gone now.

Her eyes shut for a moment as a small glimmer of a memory slid past her mind. She sighed folding the towel and placing it near the spout. She turned back around and went back to Miles.

There was no sign of the brooding gentleman. She was grateful. She had a feeling they would just find words and it wouldn’t be as simple for her to just leave it be. He was going to be a challenge. She was quite aware of this fact.

It came to her clear that he was something of a puzzle himself as she was getting to bid Miles another close of session and the gentleman of the flat came quickly down the steps with his hair dripping. “Miss…Hooper.” He spoke slowly as if his brain was still trying to catch up on what he had come home to. A woman in a bachelor’s home had that effect, she supposed.

She turned, lifting her head a little as he nearly barreled into her. “Mrs. Hudson informed me that you walk home. There is a car waiting outside. It’ll take you there. Take this, let him keep the change. Old friend of mine.” His hands barely brushed hers but in the moment that the currency was exchanged between the two of them Molly felt the roughness of his hands.

She nodded at him. “Thank…” Before she could properly finish he had her out the door.

Molly huffed but turned around to see that what he said was true. A man stood against a yellow cab as if waiting for her. “Where to Miss?” He said once they were both in the car. She told him her address and leaned back in the seat. Her eyes traveled up to the window of 221B. There was a slight swish as someone moved away from the curtain.

“What is your opinion of your new tutor?” Sherlock mumbled as he took the towel that Miles offered.

“She’s nice, sir.” Miles mumbled as he watched the older man ruffled the towel over his hair of curls trying to get as much of the water from it as he possible could.
“Nice?” He bit off. “She was messing with my things. What part of that makes her nice?”

“She just is, sir. Molly is helpful. I like her.”

Sherlock huffed. “We’ll see. How are your lessons coming?” He questioned as he guided him back into the sitting room where they sat side by side on the couch. There were biscuits and tea already on the table. Mrs. Hudson worked fast, his mouth twitched as he took his cuppa to his mouth and took a sip.

The boys spoke a little before returning to absolute silence. Mister Holmes had a lot on his mind. He had almost forgot about what was waiting for him at home. His land lady had been trying to reach him while he was away but he hadn’t thought much of it. Perhaps, he should make time to have a discussion with her about prying into his work table like that.

As he zoomed through the files that he could remember from the applicants he had looked into, she did hold promise. He would wait to see how much promise. There were to be some new variables coming into play very soon. It was on his agenda to see how she would cope with them. He planned to stay a few days in before taking off again. He needed to be sure before he left again.

Molly found herself back inside Baker Street a few days later. She didn’t see Mister Holmes but she assumed he was there or out of town again. It didn’t matter to her, at the moment at least. She was more concerned with the child that she was doubly tutoring and looking after at the same time. The latter was something not quite in the job assignment but since being around Miles, she had felt inclined to make sure everything was going well with him in his schooling and health.

Today she had decided that they would be going out. It was a nice day and Molly really wanted to show him something that could make the science seem worth it. Plants were a good way to start. The very essence of nature started with the ground and anything that flourished from it. In this light of thinking going to see the gardens was a good place to start.

She had even put some money aside in order to buy the day passes. It would be her first time venturing into one of London’s great attractions. She had heard a lot about them and learned quite a lot herself while she researched it.
It had occurred to her briefly that she wouldn’t have had to pay for it at all considering Mister Holmes’ take on her way of living. He hadn’t said so but it was clear to her that it was a common privilege to be able to get a cab or buy a nice coat. She had seen his from the paper that the other assistants shoved in her face upon finding out where she was spending her time elsewhere.

It wasn’t like she was dating the man. The thought hadn’t even crossed her mind. His attitude was quite off putting and irritating. She truly wondered if he cared at all about anyone who didn’t bow at his feet and admire him as everyone seemed to. Namely her.

In truth she didn’t care all that much what he thought of her. She was here to help a young boy better his education and that’s all that mattered right? Right.

As she opened the door to 221B and made her way up to the second floor where Miles would be waiting for her (either on the couch or in his room at his desk).

Today she was sporting a sundress/cardigan combo. The sundress was a pale green almost mint in color and the jumper bore a light yellow that reminded her of sunflowers. She wondered whether or not there would be any at the gardens.

Upon finding Miles waiting for her on the sofa, Molly smiled. “Hello Miles.”

“Miss Molly,” He answered back. The blonde wore a blue pair of shorts with a white short sleeve button up. His shoes were tucked away in his room.

“I have a surprise for you.” Molly beamed.

The young boy just stared at her, waiting for whatever adventure she wanted to throw him into today. “Do you know what a botanical garden is?” She asked while fishing out the brochure she had gotten when she went to scope out the place the day after she last saw him.

“Sure. Mister Holmes is into botany. Though nothing ever lives here. He always wants to do strange things with them.” That made Molly laugh. She could practically see the scene herself.

“Well, perhaps we could see some healthy ones just for today. It’ll give you a realistic look at how lively and beautiful and exotic they can be if treated right.” Miles did give her a brief smile. He liked the idea. That’s all that she could hope for today. “Go get your shoes on and we can be on our way.”
He did as he was told, with a nod. Before they actually left they popped into Mrs. Hudson’s place to let her know that they would be back later and supper wouldn’t be necessary for Miles unless he was still hungry afterwards. She sent them off with a smile, and a reminder to Miles to “not give Miss Hooper too much of a headache but have fun sweetie.” He promised that he would try while accepting one of her hugs.

They took a cab and made sure to order another for later just in case things got away from them while inside.

It was more thrilling than either guest could have imagined. Molly mostly because there were so many plants and flowers she had never even heard of and Miles because he had to hand it to his tutor. The Kew Gardens were breathtakingly spectacular. That coming from a boy was enough to keep Molly’s smile on her face as they walked around and learned a bit more about each house (or specie).

They decided to wait to go into the Palm House until the very end. The Princess of Wales Conservatory was the apple of Molly’s eye. Not only did the name catch her attention but as did what was inside of it. It had been one of the places she was eagerly wanting to see while they were here.

She gave Miles a brief history lesson on it as they began their trek among the variant of Asian, Madagascan and Central American plants. There were orchids, baobab trees among hundreds of other types.

“It started with Princess August who they named this Conservatory after in 1982. However, it was Princess Diana (Princess of Wales) who actually opened it in 1987 – five years after it was created. It is completely climate controlled, and broken off into sections.”

Miles surprised her then as he snapped her happy expression with his mobile. Molly didn’t even know he own one, she certainly didn’t. Molly gasped, surprised by the onslaught of the flash.

She chided him about taking her photo. “You could have just asked.” She giggled, ruffling his hair.

“That would have you admitting how much you loathe getting your picture taken, Miss Hooper. Also, where’s the fun in that?” Molly spun around, moving her bangs out of her face to look at who had given her the second surprise of the day.
She really shouldn’t have been as surprised to see Sherlock Holmes, Mister standing there with that smug smile on his face at taking her off guard (for a second time).

“How- What are you doing here?” She grumbled.

“Simple. I found out you were coming here and wanted to make sure that everything was going smoothly.”

“Found out how?” Molly wanted to give him the benefit of the doubt even if she didn’t like the way he had the ability to scare her pants off. (She wasn’t even wearing any pants today!)

“A reluctant source that really doesn’t matter right now. Do continue your lesson on this observatory. You’ve been doing swimmingly so far.”

Molly looked from Sherlock to Miles before sighing. “Where was I?” She stood rooted to the spot for a moment as she allowed herself a moment to think. Sherlock decided he’d give her a hand. It was the gentlemanly thing to do.

“The observatory being open by Diana, Princess of Wales.” He gave her the push she needed but he could also gather that she wasn’t a fan of him watching her so closely. This is what he needed. He needed proof that Miles was right. So far Molly had taken him to the one place that he hadn’t and he’d be lying if he said it didn’t bruise his ego. Even though he wasn’t there as much, he did try to make the time worth it when he was.

By the time they made it up to the Palm House Miles was hungry.

“I suppose this was enough for today. We can come back if you want?” Miles nodded eagerly. Molly smiled, looking at Sherlock from the corner of her eye. He had surprised her. This was supposed to be something he liked yet he chose to take a backseat and only hum in agreement or frown if there was something troubling him.

She soon found that he was not wholly agreeable as he appeared. The second they sat down to eat a few samplings of fish and chips at a place he had suggested on the cab ride back, he begun what he had been holding back. He almost immediately began giving Miles the extra information that she had left out. Molly realized in part that he just didn’t like to be left out or liked to have the last word; both probably.
Sherlock offered to take her home once Miles was safely back in 221B, but Molly declined. She didn’t see the point.

“I’ll see you next week then. Unless I’m not here. I might not be.” He tacked that on to get to her and she knew it but she said nothing about it. She just nodded a brief smile splayed on her face as she thanked him for picking up dinner. She was at the bottom of the steps onto the street when she remembered what she had been wanting to say.

“He’s a good boy, Mister Holmes. You have to let him out sometimes.” He opened his mouth to say something but she had waved down a cab and was getting into it.

Sherlock peeked in on Miles. “I see it.” He told him as he leaned against the door.

“Miss Hooper?” He asked quietly as he climbed into bed.

Sherlock hummed. “I’m starting to. Trying to actually. She’s a bit…” He struggled to find a better word than uptight or pissy to describe her when that’s all she was towards him.

“Try a little harder, Mister Holmes. You haven’t given her a reason to be nice yet. You’re you.”

“Thanks.” He replied sarcastically. “Get some rest.” The older man turned the light off on his way out.

He had an idea of how he could help her image of him change. He couldn’t do it alone though. He headed down to see Mrs. Hudson.

Molly had never felt so tired in her life. Never mind the years of her childhood where she spent days in the sweltering heat of the countryside in the orphanage home for girls being worked to the bone. This was less grueling yet somehow she still found herself reaching for her land-line to make the call to Mrs. Hudson.
Over the last week there was no sign of Mister Holmes. He had disappeared again. It wasn’t something that had bothered her per say but she had noticed the change in Miles. HE had seemed less than his usual self. Even if usually he was quiet and always observing her. He did ask questions but he was the opposite of his caretaker, there was no malice or arrogance in him. He was younger and much sweeter. A child’s innocence was something so special it needed to be protected/to be coveted.

It was because this reason she felt worse about having to call in on this second job. She deeply worried about Miles.

“Hello.” Martha Hudson voice came from the other end of the line. “Mrs. Hudson. It’s Molly.” She took in a deep breath.

“Oh, Good afternoon, dear. How are you?”

Molly smiled at the sweet and caring voice of the older woman. “Utterly knackered. It’s actually why I’m calling. I have to take an extra shift tomorrow at the hospital because one of the other techs can’t come in. I’m always available.” She could practically hear the shrillness in her own voice. This was the last thing she wanted to do.

As she took a small pause Mrs. Hudson intervened. “Oh you poor dear. Not to worry, Miles will be fine. I’m supposed to take him to the tailor that Mister Holmes likes. Any how, we’ll be fine here. The boy could use a break, I suppose though Sherlock probably would want a better reason why. He’s a silly man. Take care of yourself Molly. You can make it up this weekend.” Molly wanted to hug the woman but she was already too exhausted to make the trip tonight.

“I really appreciate it. Would you tell him I’m sorry for me?”

“Of course. We’ll see you this weekend then.” After they said goodbye Molly dragged herself to her room and collapsed on her bed.

The following day Molly once again was dragging her legs (feet still attached) back up to her flat for the first time in 28 hours. She had nearly made it to her door when she heard someone coming from behind her shouting, “Miss. Miss Hooper. You’re Miss Molly Hooper, right?” She just about tripped as she turned to see who wanted her attention and why.

A tall gentleman with a golden beard and fairly damp hair stopped barely a meter from her.
“You’re her?” He asked again. She looked him over minutely. He wore the baggiest jeans that she had ever seen outside of the hospital – A&E particularly. Paired with the denim he had on a dark green hoodie and a dark shirt that Molly couldn’t see that well in the dim lighting.

“Y-yes. I am. Who are you?” She asked.

“Sorry for the scare, Miss. I came to deliver this. Mister wanted to be sure you got it today or yesterday really but you’ve been away.”

Molly stiffened at the thought that this man had been practically stalking her residence waiting for her to get back home. It felt so wrong. She didn’t like it.

She backed away hurriedly. “Who sent you?”

“Didn’t give his name. He does that. Seemed important anyhow.” It was then that she noticed the envelope that was partially wet sticking out for her to accept.

If only to get away from this situation and the strange man standing before her with that odd smile on his face, she took it. “Thank you. You should go.” Molly didn’t have a habit of being rude but when she felt utterly uncomfortable she could be pushed into sounding that way. This was one of those moments.

She immediately turned and headed (read: rushed) down the hallway to her home where it was safe.

When she was safely inside she dropped her bag, took off her coat and placed it on the hook that she had gotten from a second hand shop a few weeks back. She opened the envelope that looked in its semi-limp condition elegant. There was a seal made of golden wax. She thought that very odd. Who still had wax for seals like that? It was baffling to her. She inspected it further and found an ‘H’ emblazoned in the center of the emblem.

She waited until she had made it to her kitchen and flipped on the lights to take out what was inside. It couldn’t be anything but paper or perhaps a card due to how light it felt in her hands.

What she found inside was an invitation. The invitation itself was black with bright yellow lettering.
On the front – it was folded down in the fashion of a greeting card separating the details under the flap – was a set of figures dancing.

A party? She wondered as she opened it completely. She peeped through the details and found who had sent it.

She let out an audible groan.

Why would he send this to her. He could have just asked?

**SHERLOCK HOLMES**

**221 B BAKER STREET**

The kicker was that the place of housing the event wasn’t in London at all nor was it close to Baker Street in the slightest. Instead, it was a home address of a city much further away from where she resided in a place called Lincoln (Lincolnshire).

What was he thinking?

- Sherlock wasn’t there the next time Molly was over for Miles. She had really wanted to talk to him about this event he was planning. If she had learned anything about him in the few instances they had been in the same room there wouldn’t be many lower class people in his circle of acquaintances that were also going to attend. She honestly didn’t know what that would do for her or Miles for that matter. She had become more concerned about the welfare of the young boy than she was of herself. She had spent years dealing with the self-righteous upper class. A night (if she actually planned to go) surrounded by more of them wouldn’t hurt hurt her seriously if she didn’t allow it to. She could always stick to the walls - being there but never actually being there was one of her specialties.

There were times of course when she was pulled into the fray unwillingly. She could only hope that wasn’t what this was about.

She would probably be more inclined to violence if Sherlock or any of his *friends* decided to ridicule her in any light.

This was the main reason she wanted to talk to him. She needed to know what she was getting herself into. As such she needed a way to contact him and discuss this thoroughly.

She found Mrs. Hudson on her way out. Peeking her head in as the elder woman brought a tray out to bring to Miles for dinner. *At least he didn’t starve*, she thought.
“Leaving us for the evening, dear?” Molly smiled.

“Yes. I wouldn’t mind staying one of these days if only to see how everything goes throughout the day.”

Mrs. Hudson chuckled. “We’re simple people really, apart from the madman that is never here. You’re welcome to stay anytime dear. This might be HIS home but he isn’t who can say who stays and who goes; despite what he might think. I am the landlady.” Molly admired her spark. It was refreshing to see that when compared to the maniac behavior that came with Sherlock Holmes.

“Thank you. Perhaps another night. Is there anyway for me to contact said madman when he’s not here?”

The brightness shone in the landlady’s eyes making it abundantly clear she had an intriguing thought. “Not sure why I didn’t think of this before. I don’t know why you would want to talk to him, if I can be frank Molly. He’s a bit worse when he’s away. I tried to contact him once when we were having plumbing issues, and he got quite upset with me because he was in the middle of thinking. He calls it his mind palace or something like that. You’d think he was throwing a tantrum.” Molly could practically envision it herself. It sent her into a sputter of giggles.

Molly followed Mrs. Hudson up to where Miles was reading on the couch. Molly wondered what would happen if she brought an old gaming console her one day. What would Miles do? Would he play it?

She decided maybe one day she would. As her own research in observation. There was a shop that rented them out a few blocks down from her flat. It certainly wouldn’t hurt to see what it would cost her. It was something fun to do. She really wanted the kid to have fun. Even if it wasn’t directly about what she had been brought here to do. Fun came in different ways.

She herself had only been into an arcade a handful of times when she first escaped the home/orphanage. It had been like opening a brand new door.

“I would just like to talk to him about something. Not that important really but I would feel better speaking with him about it nonetheless.” It wasn’t a complete lie. It really wasn’t a serious matter or even a problem for that matter.

Mrs. Hudson found a piece of paper from Sherlock’s desk - a space where Molly had yet to actually venture to out of annoyance of what he said to her the first time they had crossed paths. In all honesty she did he did seem to have a sort of messy clean thing going over here. She was sure he was the only one that would understand the cluttered organization. At least it wasn’t as bad as the kitchen/lab had been.

A phone number was jotted down. No name but she assumed it had to be Sherlock’s personal mobile number. “Thank you. I’ll see you guys soon.” She went over and ruffled Miles’ hair before making her exit.

“I want a haircut.” Miles mumbled even though he was smiling at Molly’s retreating figure. Mrs. Hudson knew that he liked Molly. He had even spoken briefly about ‘If only Mister Holmes and Miss Molly got along.’

If Sherlock’s last visit about the party had anything to do with that Mrs. Hudson was sure his hopes were not on false ears.

Sherlock did listen to Miles over anyone else. Perhaps his sights were set on making things as easy as
possible, or maybe it was something more lurking underneath the surface.

--

Sherlock was in the middle of nearly tearing down a shabby looking man when his mobile started ringing excessively. He slowly reached down for a moment to silence it without seeing who could be trying to reach him right now.

He frankly didn’t care. In that moment it took him to do that the man started to edge away. The detective quickly knocked out his getaway path.

“It’s rude to disappear when someone is talking.”

“You’re frightening, sir.” The man crumbled into the wall.

“Yes, well I don’t get the job done if I’m nice.” He wasn’t good at it either which made it easier for him to continue down this route of aggressively asking questions to get the answers he needed to move forward.

If that doctor had been wiling to join him on this trip wouldn’t have been this hard. John Watson was busy with working. Didn’t he understand this was his work? No. He didn’t. He rather be in a hospital - clinic rather that didn’t pay him as much as the thrill of getting the bad guys did for him.

This current one was being highly annoying and harder to track down. Hence this method. It also didn’t help that he was distracted by the party he was doing in a week.

He could have passed the whole affair over to one of the people who did that for a living. The personal touch seemed to be the best way to get what he wanted out of it. He didn’t know why he wanted so long. It would have a better way to introduce himself to Molly Hooper than the whole kitchen fiasco.

In truth he still wasn’t sure why he was trying so hard to please the girl. She didn’t like him. She just dealt with him because he was there sometimes. He supposed he wanted her to at least see him in a better light because he wasn’t used to that. People did get irritated with him but this felt different. With others it was easy for him to deal with the things they said about him. It was about his brain. The papers wrote about his behavior but it was always dressed up as some kind of glorious trait that helped complete a case.

It was his life. His body. He really didn’t care but his ego was directly feed by the notion of the attention. The lack of attention bothered it. Yet alas here he was grasping at straws for one silly woman’s attention in the way that was at least deemed nice. He wanted nice from her.

His phone started chiming off again.

He huffed, letting go of the man when he saw who it was.

This was new. Unexpected. Why was she calling?

“Molly?” He answered.

“You’re answering.” She stated, she sounded frustrated by his lack of giving her the time of day.

“I’m busy.” He couldn’t take the bite off his tongue.

“Aren’t we all?” She mumbled.
Sarcasm. He sighed as he begun walking back up to the main road.

An alleyway was his brand for interrogations for lowlifes anyways. Most of them were useful in London. He had helpers there. This wasn’t London.

Where was he this week? Morocco? Ireland? The places he traveled had a habit of blurring together despite the change in scenery.

“You’re not going to ask?”

“Ask what?” he heard something in the background. She was using the land-line he realized as he looked at the time. Lessons with Miles were done. She was back at her place.

He had scoped it out one night when she wasn’t there. When she was work or maybe university. She was taking a few extra courses.

His brother had updated her file and sent it to him in an encrypted message.

“I have your land-line. Didn’t you find it odd that I knew it was you?” She had to find that strange.

“No. Not really. I don’t know what you do Mister Holmes but I assume you know more about me than I do. Phone numbers aren’t hard to find.”

“Mrs. Hudson.” He mumbled knowing that was the only reason she could have gotten his. His contact info wasn’t a matter public record. Email? Yes. Phone. No.

The other line was silent but he knew she was still there. Her breathing was calm as if this was normal. It was the opposite for him. He didn’t understand how she could be this way with someone in her words ‘you know more about me than I know about you.’ It would piss anyone else off.

She spoke quietly on the line after a moment of nothing from him.

“You’re my employer, technically. Information is something you have. How else would I have been contacted in the first place?” She was right and her point put him in a better state of mind.

“So why are you calling, Miss Hooper?”

“Oh.” She paused. There was more rustling in the background before she found what she was looking for. “A guy brought me something the other night from you.”

The invitation. He knew that that was what she was referring to.

He probably should have realized that was what this was about.

“You got the invite. Good.”

“Why did I get it?” Sherlock was confused. It should have been obvious why she had gotten it. “I’m sorry?” He asked.

“Why am I needed there?”

He couldn’t exactly tell her she was the reason it was happening, could he? No. It would ruin the plans.

He hadn’t even told Miles yet. He was going to wait until they went to the tailor to get him fitted for his wardrobe to tell him about it. It was going to be a surprise to them both.
“For Miles. He’s coming too.”

He hoped it would be enough for her to stop asking questions but, he knew it wouldn’t stop curiosity. She was a scientist. They were curious by nature.

“Oh.” He might not have been fully prepared for the disappointment in her voice. It was merely one word but it said a lot to what she thought.

“No way to get out of it then. I’ll make sure he has a lovely time.” Then there was nothing but dial tone.

No. That wasn’t what he wanted.

Sherlock looked down at his mobile as it faded to black. He pocketed it, let out a loud groan before breaking out into a run. He needed to finish this so he could go fix this.

--

Molly got her answer but somehow it made her feel worse about the situation. Previously she would have been able to deal with it. Now felt different. Ever since hanging up on Sherlock she had felt utterly wrecked by the notion that she was merely invited to babysit. She knew it was her job in a way but for once she wanted to feel like it wasn’t about that. Despite that she didn’t understand him she wanted to feel like she was a part of something on a neutral base.

She was an asset. Someone to hand off a job off to while everyone else enjoyed themselves. This was her life.

So she would suck it up and deal with it. There wasn’t anything she could do. She wondered if he understood that.

He had locked her in a box that she already felt was closing her in except he was the one who was doing it.

Next lesson came quickly and Molly had a hard time faking the enthusiasm to teach. Miles had caught onto this fact an hour into her spacing out on him during an explanation of viscosity. “We can take a break.”

He didn’t sound sad or annoyed. Miles had a determined look on his face. It wasn’t something Molly was used to. He kept small smiles and boyishly coy mischief when she had things for her. Never this drive.

It reminded her of someone…

She shut her eyes. Caera Cassidy. Her best friend from the orphanage. She had the same mischief and spark. It was odd that she hadn’t noticed it before.

Miles placed his hand on her shoulder by kneeling in his chair. “Miss..Molly.”

She opened her eyes just a bit to peek at him. “You alright?”

She gave him a smile. “‘Course. Yes, let’s take a break. What would you like to do?”

“We have movies.”

“Really?” Where would they be, she wondered. She had never seen any of them before Miles hopped off the chair and extended a hand to her. “Let’s go.” Molly was pulled along down the
hallway to the sitting area where she usually found him. He let go of her hand and ventured over to the sofa where he ducked down and started to pull something from under it. When he came back with a box he put it on the table.

Molly came over and flicked through the boxes of films. “He doesn’t know they’re there?”

“He does. This is a new one.” Miles told her picking up a box with two people shining lights at something through the darkness. It looked like the first series of a detective show. Molly thought it odd that he would want it. Miles laughed at Molly’s expression.

“It’s amusing if you know what he does for a living.”

It was kind of funny that she didn’t think to ask the little boy who lived with the man himself what it was he did. He was a mad scientist of some sort. She figured with his experiments but that wasn’t it completely. He would stay home and continue making that monstrosity of a lab worse.

“What does he do?”

Miles continue smiling at her for a moment as he selected a film. He moved over to the setup where the TV was tucked and popped it in the little DVD player that was setup under the television. He nabbed the remote and walked back over to the sofa and sat down. He waited until Molly was sitting down to tell her.

“He’s a detective.” He left out the self proclaimed title because he liked to hear him tell people that bit.

Sherlock Holmes was a detective?

This left Molly with more answers than questions. She didn’t want anymore right now so she settled in to watch the film that Miles had picked up.

8:15PM, SAME DAY

Sherlock rushed up the stairs. He wasn’t in any hurry but he had spotted Molly’s coat still hanging near the door.

What was she still doing here? He came to a slow halt. The first thing he should have noticed was the TV was on flashing brightly as gunshots were blaring in the background. However, the thing he was focusing on was the pair on the couch.

Miles was curled up on Molly’s lap completely knocked out. One of his hands was wrapped around hers. Molly herself was also sleeping. Her neck couldn’t be comfortable in that position which made him move forward.

At first he thought of taking Miles to his room but he looked comfortable where he was. He then thought to move him to the other side of the sofa so that he could stretch out then he could maneuver Molly as well. But it seemed like a lot of hassle so instead he carefully moved her body slowly from her shoulders and laid her down on her side.

She stirred just slightly before falling back to sleep.

He went to the closet in the hallway to grab the spare blanket and spread across them.

Sherlock took a seat in his chair and just stared at them for a few moments.
He felt a change coming. He didn’t know if it was because of this one moment but he believed it had to be a good change. It had to, right?

A few days ago he was concerned over what she thought of him. Here she was curled up with the most important person in his life.

What did it all mean?

He ruffled his curls as he tired to work it out. He quickly got nowhere.

Did it mean he shouldn’t worry? Or was this the beginning of something he wouldn’t ever truly figure out?

For the night he wouldn’t worry. His plan was still in motion. He moved out of the room and into his own to start to finalize some of these details. He made sure to shut the door in case he started yelling. He didn’t want to wake them up.

Molly woke up to a start. She didn’t know where she was for a moment. Until she sat up and took in the decor. She was still in Baker Street. She must have fallen asleep.

She noticed the blanket around the same time that Mrs. Hudson came through the door with a tray.

“You finally slept over, dearie. Sleep okay?”

“I think so. I don’t remember falling asleep. Where’s Miles?” He had been with her the last time she was awake. He had been the first to fall asleep. She had been trying to figure out the right time to leave. It never happened. She fell asleep on the couch. But where did the blanket come from?

“Sherlock. He got back last night. They’re gone out for a bit. He said something about you staying. Wants to talk to you.”

Molly looked at her wrist.

OH NO.

She couldn’t stay. She had work.

“Have to go. I have work in an hour.”

Molly started to head towards the door. Mrs. Hudson reached her as she came to a halt. “I’ll tell him to call you later if it’s really important to him.”

To Sherlock everything seemed to have a smidgen of importance. She just hoped he would be okay waiting to talk about it when she had more time.

He had held himself back. Decided to wait until Molly took her break to approach her. She sat in the corner of the canteen with a sandwich she had brought from home by the sight of the floral bag she had brought with her.

He wondered why she didn’t just use the money he sent her every week in payment for her helping Miles to buy something to eat. Perhaps she’s the kind who enjoys fixing her own meals.

He moved to sit across from her, startling her. “What-?” Molly began to ask what she always did whenever Sherlock popped up when she wasn’t expecting him.
“You left. It was actually something important that I needed to discuss with you.”

“Okay,” she breathed waiting for him to tell her what he wanted.

They had eyes on them. Sherlock ignored them even with Molly shrinking minutely as she took a sip of her water.

“I’ll need you at the Lincolnshire address earlier than what’s on the invitation.”

“Why?” He had begun to realize when she was going to ask questions. That turned out to be always when Molly was concerned. She didn’t like him springing anything on her without a warning. He did this to everyone. She wasn’t special in that regard.

He flexed his fingers where they sat entwined on top of the table.

“Miles and I are going a few days earlier to settle in.”

“You’ve been there before?” She guessed.

“It’s one of the properties I own, yes.” He didn’t see how that mattered but if it helped ease her concerns and allowed her admission to joining them he wouldn’t say anything about it.

“How early are you going?” She asked after a moment, another bite out of her sandwich to finish it off. He sniffed, it had been tuna. He was hungry. He didn’t get anything after the tailor, perhaps he’d pick something up on the way back home.

“A week. Thought it was time for a break from the norm.” He smiled at her.

This made Molly nervous. It felt like he was going through a lot of trouble to get this all together. A part of her wished to know why. What was the point of this charade. She had pin pointed that that was what this was. One big show and she was a part of it. Why?

“I don’t know if I can get the time off. A weekend? Maybe. A whole week? that is nearly asking for the hand of God.” Sherlock had noticed the pendant that hung at her neck. A cross. The most holy signature of a church goer. He couldn’t figure out if it was put there for some other reason or that she was really a believer.

Everything that he had learned about her didn’t give any definite proof of her beliefs. She believed in the science. Where did faith come along in that? It didn’t for him. Regardless the answer to her statement was simple. He had foresaw her hesitancy.

“No matter. I took care of it.” Sherlock fully expected her to protest but something about her demeanor was changing.

She was becoming more calm about reacting rashly towards him. It was an interesting development.

“Alright. It might take me some time to get there.”

“You should be able to get a ticket for Monday. We’ll be there on Sunday.” Her laugh caught him off guard. He grew stock still. “What?”

“No arranging that for me too?”

Sherlock didn’t relax as much with her looking so cheerful towards hi but he was able to shake off the initial shock of it all.
“I have to let you do some things for yourself, don’t I?”

Molly smiled. that was a call back to what she had told him about Miles.

He had been listening. She would give him points for that.

“I have to get back.” She began to put her things back in the blue floral bag as she rose to her feet.

“I’ll leave the rest of the details in your mailbox. Sorry about Billy.” Molly paused as she started to walk away. She turned towards Sherlock as he continued speaking. “He can make people uneasy. More so than I can, I am told.”

Molly realized he was referring to the bloke who had brought her the invitation.

She just gave him a slight nod in recognition before leaving him there.

-

Molly got on the train at King’s Cross at noon that Monday. It was going to take the better part of the day to arrive there with a few stops. Nine and a half hours in total. So she brought plenty to keep her entertained. She had course books, a historical romance novel that she hadn’t yet gotten a chance to read with how busy her schedule was between school, work, and the second job that she didn’t if she was even counting as employment anymore. It wasn’t normal for jobs to have you spend weeks away from home for non work related things.

In truth she knew she wasn’t going to be able to focus on any of the things she had brought with her. It had been an excuse to bring more than she had needed. Between the duffel that held her clothes and the bag she had brought on board with her various activities. She had nearly brought her life. It almost made her sad. Yet, she couldn’t allow herself to go there.

Her brain had shifted it’s focus to the past. To the friend that she found herself missing. She almost felt like she was there. Sitting across from her. Smiling with her ginger curls and the beige night gown she had been in when she last saw her. The day she died.

Caera Cassidy was different looking now. It was as if she had aged with Molly. She was beautiful. A beauty she didn’t think she had ever seen in person.

“You’re not here.” Molly mumbled.

The woman sitting in front of her swung her legs back and forth as she sat forward inching closer to Molly. “I’m with you always, Molly. You’ve been missing me lately.”

Molly’s eyes shone. She knew not to trust this. It was her imagination. They always said her imagination was wild.

Molly shut her eyes willing this woman, this image to disappear. It wouldn’t help her now. When she opened her eyes she was still there.

“What do you want?” She cried.

“Who do you need?” Caera mumbled back.

Molly let out a sigh as she looked out the window it was black but she could clearly felt the track moving under it.

“I don’t know what I’m supposed to do next.”
Almost instantly the ghost of her old friend replied, “He isn’t going to kill you. He’s curious. He wants to know the little girl who was my best friend. The woman who sees me in the boy she’s tutoring.”

“How do you know that?” Molly sighed.

“I’m not just sitting on my butt, Molly. I do notice things.” Caera chuckled.

Molly smiled. Caera had been the one light in her life. She wouldn’t steer her wrong, but could she trust this vision of her? Was that safe?

“Everything will be okay, Molls. Just be yourself. Don’t visit me too soon. I like watching your life unfold. It’s a good life.”

Before Molly could expound on what she had seen. Her old friend had disappeared. Now it was just her. She looked at her watch. 2 hours had passed by. Seven more hours to go.

When Molly finally arrived in Lincoln Central Station she wasn’t surprised how utterly exhausted she was from traveling. She didn’t expect to see Sherlock waiting for her though. In fact they hadn’t spoken about who she was to see when she finally made it to the station. It had been odd but in a funny way she was glad it was him.

No awkward introductions to be had. It was good. Her sleep addled mind couldn’t bare it either. She did however thank him when he took her bag from her when she met him in the midway.

“You didn’t sleep.” He commented. He looked down at her bag as if something was wrong, and before she could inquire about it he was continuing on. “I’ve never carried a woman’s luggage and it be this light.” He seemed delightfully befuddled by it.

Molly had packed only enough for the week. Mostly clothes besides what she had brought on the train to entertain herself. It seemed silly now to have have done so when she hadn’t even touched it. Maybe she’d have some downtime here before the party. They would be here an entire week and it was supposed to be a break from work on all fronts.

If she was honest, Molly wasn’t sure what that entailed completely. She hadn’t had a full week for herself since before university. It was going to be a new experience.

“Where’s Miles?” She asked after they had properly entered the village. They were going to walk to the house. It couldn’t be that far. Molly hoped it wasn’t. Her legs were already beginning to drag because she was barely awake. She steadied her focus on the tall detective who was a few paces ahead of her with her bag hanging loosely over his shoulder.

“With a colleague of mines. His name is John. He’s a doctor - surgeon actually. He usually makes it a habit to join me when I come up here. He says it’s because he likes the solitude but I think it’s because he doesn’t want me to be lonely. I protest that line of thought. I happen to like being on my own. It’s why I like the city so much. Less chaos, but pleasant all the same.” He paused for a moment, “Besides I’m not alone. I do have Miles.”

Molly was startled by the long answer he ushered onto her. She had seen him dissect things before with his mind. The day at Kew Gardens was fresh on her mind. This was a different kind of dialect. This was normal people talk. Small talk. She wasn’t used to the enigma doing that. It didn’t seem easy for him yet walking and talking like this about personal matters flowed out of him.

“How often do you come here?” Sherlock stopped after they had gotten a fork in the path. They were either going down a forest path that looked to be littered by much green and few flowers that
bloomed over hedges, or the second path led to a much clearer area. Molly wasn’t sure where either path would take them but she figured Sherlock would take her on the right path to get where they needed to be going.

“Hm? Oh not that often actually. I acquired the residence before I came to know Miles. He’s the only person that would come with me in the beginning though.”

This is where Molly’s intrigue continued to blossom. How had he found Miles? Never-mind his relation for a second - How did they cross paths to begin with? Her mind began to wander once more as they took the path that was surrounded by the greenery. She continued forward without saying anything more. She did notice Sherlock twisting around her every few minutes just to make sure she was still following him.

When they finally stopped for the last time Molly couldn’t stop her jaw from dropping and openly admiring the castle. It was a small one but she could tell from the upkeep that the inside was much grander.

The castle itself was encased with grey marble that built the walls. An open tower was the first visible thing that she could see from the top. Surrounding the outside was a bid bath with a small garden that led up to the front of the door that was splayed a darker blue as to not look out of place in the setting.

Sherlock watched for a moment before nudging her along. She still looked exhausted through her admiration of where they would be spending the week. “You can roam later when it’s not so dimly lit.”

It was nighttime now. She had almost forgot that despite her tired disposition.

Molly had to stop herself from gawking too much as they slipped through the fore and came to a sitting room where a fire was going. This is where Miles came sprinting at the sight of Miss Molly Hooper. He didn’t embrace her as he didn’t do that ever but he was beaming at her slightly as Sherlock stepped away to go put Molly’s bag in her room. He was going to have her follow him but he couldn’t take her away from Miles. He had been waiting for her to get here as much as he was not that he knew that. It was something he kept to himself.

Molly as was her nature when greeting or leaving the young boy ruffled his hair. “Hello Miles. Sorry it took me so long.” She giggled.

“he’s been eager for your arrival.” Molly’s head jerked up at the voice. She hadn’t had time to look about the room so she hadn’t even seen the short man who was edging closer to her.

“Has he?” She looked down at the kid and smiled kindly. Perhaps he had grown to like her as much as she already liked Miles.

“He’s exaggerating.” Miles stuck his tongue out at the blond haired man.

“Kids these days.” He chuckled. “I’m John Watson. Friend of Sherlock’s. You must be Molly.” Molly’s eyes widen a fraction wondering which one of the men from 221 B had been talking of her so much that this man she had never met knew of her existence before they had ever been introduced.

Yet, in the way of things Sherlock interrupted before that could be made clear. “We can finish this in the morning. Molly didn’t sleep on the train.” It could have been accusatory if not for the weird grin on the detective’s mouth.
He was so at ease it was making her begin to worry about him. She didn’t know how to navigate all these new out of body feelings and thoughts she was having about him. It almost felt like it wasn’t supposed to be there.

Even so she regretfully bid a good night to the two blonds before following Sherlock down a hall and up a set of long steps before entering a room on the left side.

“I imagine this will be a comfortable place for you for a little while.” Molly couldn’t deny how inviting the room looked. The bed was calling to her however, so with as little grace as she could possibly half in her state she stumbled through a quick ‘thank you’ before Sherlock was rushed out of her room.

He chuckled from the outside as he heard the sigh that was echoing from inside the room as the young woman collapsed onto the bed.

He had been right and he had been pleased about it.

The next morning would begin the second phase: Breakfast and Friendship. The latter sounded childish so he soon exed it and reformed his next phase as simply ‘Breakfast’.

Breakfast couldn’t be over simplified even if it was just the meal. The most important meal of the day his mum reminded him cheerfully. He had been thinking of her a lot. His brother’s reminder to drop in before going back to London next week was blaring noisily in his ears.

Later. He reminded the voice.

He returned downstairs to have a night cap with John who was smiling rather enthusiastically - this was probably the first time that he wasn’t ready to completely delete the annoying grin that was being directed at him.

“Stop that.” He told him after taking a seat. Miles had gone to his room, he noticed. He wouldn’t have minded if he stayed up with him. It never really bothered him. He supposed he wanted to be rested for the morning too.

“I won’t. You’ve never brought one before.”

“One? What the hell are you going on about?” Sherlock grumbled before knocking back a tumbler of Scotch.

“Molly. You don’t bring women here. Alder was a client and she followed you to get some intel for Moriarty. Before you start know that I don’t really know what happened between you two and I really don’t care.”

Sherlock answered the same as he always did when the subject popped up. It wasn’t often but it was enough for him to have developed a formulaic response. “Nothing happened. She was there for a night then she disappeared. Rather simple really.”

The doctor hummed, unsure if he actually believed what he said. There was only one instance to date that it mattered that he believed Sherlock. It was the one time his friend had ever allowed himself to be vulnerable in his presence.

John looked past the fire to the right where the young boy now resided in another room. He was on the ground floor where it was easiest to leave if necessary. John couldn’t say with any definite measure that something like that wouldn’t happen. There was something that he knew weighted heavily whenever they found their way back here.
The morning light hit Molly in the face giving her the incentive to open her eyes. She yawned, and peeked one eye open before immediately closing them again. She gave herself a few minutes before trying again. She reminded herself to close the curtains later.

She sat up slowly and wiped her eyes so that it didn’t feel so hard look around. A small amount of the yellow crust was still there but she would deal with it at a later time. From what she could readily see there was already so much here. A wide open space outside of the four poster bed with a canopy. The bedding was a pale peach color.

If she didn’t know any better it was chosen especially for her. Or a woman specifically. The bedding was only the first sign of this being the truth. The vanity that sat directly in front of the trunk that was at the foot of the bed was the next one. She knew that men could use them also but there were a few objects that already lay there that made her suspicions grew immediately stronger about it. A brush, a cream marble with thick bristles for brushing out extremely thick and matted tresses. A second mirror for applying creams and make up she supposed. She didn’t do much of that. She didn’t see the need these days. Molly was the mind that these were trivial things unless a special occasion arose.

Tonight could be seen as such an event but she was undecided about that.

She could only see so much, so she tumbled out of the bed and padded her sock covered feet around to the door that was near the bedside table and opened it. Inside were a few hangers none of them hanging anything a part from one. Her coat. Someone must have come in here. Her bag wasn’t in here she noticed. She spun on the spot and looked at the trunk again, nothing there on the surface.

She sighed. She would have to find it in order to get dressed for the day. Her smaller bag that she had kept in the compartment with her was sitting in front of the night table. She dug into it for a small black box. She opened it quickly and slipped on the specs.

Today she would wear them for a little while. She hadn’t a reason, she just thought it would be a nice change from straining. Especially now when she desperately needed to find something. She was still in yesterday’s clothes and though there wasn’t nothing wrong with her clothes - apart from the wrinkles she needed to fix her hair and brush her teeth. These were things she didn’t expect to see in a massive quantity - she could be wrong.

The trunk, she thought again as she walked back over to it and lifted it open. There wasn’t a lock on it which was curious to her. Inside were her belongs all littered out in neat piles. Her bag of toiletries sat in the lower corner.

Molly looked at it strangely before picking out some clothing and the hygiene things that she would need currently. Next thing was finding out where the bathroom was. She couldn’t see anything more in the room that she needed to look at now. She did like that there was desk near the tall windows. Beyond the open curtains the scene outside was peaceful.

She moved towards the door and opened it, peeking her head out she saw no one. It was quiet inside too. It was a huge place and she was reminded of Sherlock’s promise that she could explore today. After breakfast, perhaps?

She moved to the next door and tried to open it. LOCKED.

She sighed. She wished he would have told her last night where the bathroom was. What if she had gotten up in the middle of night and had to go relieve herself? Speaking of which she currently had to go to the bathroom. She rushed through the next set of doors before she came to a slightly ajar
A familiar sound actually but she didn’t know if she should go inside or not.

She waited a few seconds before the door opened by itself. There inside was Miles - who had been laughing - and John who she had met last night. She held her belongs close as not to drop them as she watched John turned slightly at her appearance. He was shaving his face with Miles sitting on the toilet. Something about this was incredibly funny to the child. The look on John’s face made Molly started snickering too.

He looked so surprised.

“Oh. Molly, good morning. Just trying to have a wash. You know there’s a washroom right across from your room? Or did he not tell you? The git, sorry…” He turned to Miles who laughed harder at the older blonde’s language.

Molly smiled at him. “No, guess not. Was pretty tired. Sherlock wanted me to rest. Very insistent man, isn’t he?”

John found that funny. “You have no idea.”

She didn’t stand there much longer, told them she’d see them downstairs as long as she could find the dining room (a laugh there) before heading back down the hall to the door that was directly across from hers. Her own bathroom she supposed.

She slipped in, it mirrored the one she had only peeked into with John and Miles. A bit small but had everything she needed in it. Towels hanging on bars near the sink. She grabbed two before turning on the water. A long shower would be nice.

She got ready pretty quickly after that and only returned to her room to grab a pair of shoes before making her descent downstairs. It didn’t take her dreadfully long to find the dining area. She only had to follow the smell of eggs and something fruity smelling. She couldn’t put her finger on what that was but when she found the kitchen she found Sherlock.

It was a scene close to what she imagined happened when he was doing his experiments. In fact it was close to the mess that she had cleaned up before.

“Need a hand?” She piped up from the doorway.

“Molly!” He was talking loudly as if she wouldn’t be able to hear him but he was using a mixer so that could be the reason why. Was he making a cake or something? She hoped not. He had too many different ingredients to work with. It would be an odd cake.

She did remember smelling eggs though. Perhaps biscuits? Or muffins? You could eat a good muffin for breakfast. In truth she was completely thrown by him cooking. She always remembered Mrs. Hudson bringing food up to the flat so she didn’t think he knew how. Surprise, surprise on her.

“No. I got this.” He looked back to what he was working on for a moment. He looked lost for a moment before picking up a bag of something and adding it to the mixture.

Molly didn’t fully believe in that but she would leave him to it. She just cleaned herself, she didn’t want to get dirty so early on. So she exited out the way she came and started wandering. She would leave upstairs for later, she went directly out door that was on the side. It led down a set of steps into the grass. There were several trees around this area, what interested her the most were the shrubbery that was tucked beyond it in a small rectangle. This was something that had to be kept up. It meant
that someone was here when the Holmes group was not.

She wondered who it was. Was it someone Sherlock knew or was it a hired hand? She kept finding more and more questions that needed to be answered. She couldn’t say that she didn’t have the time anymore. They had breakfast, and now an entire week to talk about things. If she thought anymore about it would become clear that this could serve as a point where they learned more about each other with work off the table.

If she did that, she didn’t know how to think about it. But, she didn’t. There was no time for that. No place for those emotions currently.

The smile that slipped onto her face as she crouched carefully as not to dirty the sundress she had on and touched the petal of the lilac colored flower that sat in neat rows. They were only six inches in length, a few shorter than that. She had just about to get back to a standing position when she heard footsteps coming close.

She turned slightly to see who was following her. The sun was deflecting her vision but his voice gave her all the answer she needed. He was just in the kitchen cooking, what was he doing out here with her now?

“*Iris reticulata.*” He stated as if it was the simple explanation. He gestured to the flowers as he squatted beside her. “Or as they are normally called *dwarf iris*. They don’t go grow too tall, not intrusive which I like. Don’t take much tending to either which is good when I’m not around.”

“Do you have a gardener?” She asked aloud. Looking at the way his eyes brighten when he started telling her about the planting. She was reminded of the fact that he had an interest in the study of them; botany.

“I have a woman who comes and tends to it occasionally, yes.” He gave her a strained look as if the thought of the person in question made him feel uncomfortable.

*Oh.*

“These aren’t native...where did you get them?” Molly knew something about them. The fact that he gave her the layman’s term for it did help. She hadn’t learned the scientific name for it. Her mum had been happy to make things as simple as she could when she had asked about what she was getting at the home and gardening shop. Before she passed.

Molly inhaled as she waited for Sherlock to answer her question. However, a full minute had passed and he hadn’t done so. She lifted her head from the ground where it had fell slightly when she got the small burst of a memory about a woman that she really couldn’t readily remember beyond the brightness of her smile and her hair color. Everything else was a blank space.

Sherlock was looking at her. Dissecting her as he did anyone and it made her get to her feet and turn back towards the house. It was entirely too invasive for him to do that. She didn’t want to know what he saw or how it made him feel. She could see it in his eyes. Seeing her that way did do things to him but she didn’t fully comprehend why.

“The woman who tends. She’s family. She likes to tell me about some things.” He continued as if nothing had transpired between the two of them. In truth it was nothing.

Molly nodded, turning her head an inch towards the man who had put his hands into his pocket as he stared straight ahead at the house instead of her. “Was there something you wanted when you came out here?”
“Breakfast is ready. John and Miles are waiting inside.” He waited for Molly to start walking before he continued on behind her keeping at least seven steps behind her as to give her space. She looked like she wanted some.

This was going to be harder than he initially thought.

Breakfast for all intents and purposes went off without a hitch. Molly and John spoke mostly, with Sherlock adding little tidbits. He would for the most part tease Miles about nothing at all but the idea of having him feel like the only kid at the table was something that made the older gentleman want to try to make sure he knew that he wasn’t. John had often called him a child for one reason or another. Wouldn’t hurt him too much to act like it for a small person’s benefit.

After the morning meal was over, Molly offered to wash the dishes. Sherlock tried to stop her from doing so as there were other things that she could be doing. Other fun things that also involved Miles but then the boy decided that he wanted to help too and somehow they had formed an assembly line the kitchen starting with Molly who had left her jumper in the sitting room so that it wouldn’t get wet.

It left her with the yellow dress that she had donned this morning. She didn’t seem to mind getting her arms completely soaked with suds as she began the clean up portion of the day. They could have left them for the crew that would be here latter for the dinner party. Molly had been insistent. The only person who didn’t join the assemble line was Sherlock himself.

He watched from the doorway for a few minutes before heading to the small office that he kept here to make a phone call.

“Really William, you couldn’t be bothered to tell her that I was the gardener? I am your mother.” Sherlock sighed heavily, deeply regretting to call mummy for help about a girl problem. Her first line when he started to ask was that it had never happened before. She wasn’t wrong. He never asked for help with anyone lest of all a woman.

He had made sure not to tell her too much about her in case she wanted to know more about her. He hoped that if the day came that they were ever introduced that it was a happy occasion and not as awkward as this phone call felt to him.

“I don’t tell anyone about you. You’re my mum.”

He heard her sigh from the other side of the line. “Precisely. I’d think it was important for someone to know that you do actually have people that care about you.”

“Caring is…” He started to recite the line that his brother had taught him when they were kids.

“Nonsense.” She cut right in. “Regardless, you do seem to care about this girl. Try to show that to her in a less direct way. See if it works. If not you can always do what you planned.”

His mother had been talking to his land lady.

“Goodbye, Mummy.” He said before hanging up the phone.

John was standing in the doorway when he turned his chair around. “I knew it was something. Good to know my eavesdropping is good for something after all these years.” The blonde was beaming.

“Shut up.” He said, gritting his teeth. “Where are Molly and Miles?”

“He wanted to show her his favorite spot.”
Miles’ favorite spot was far behind the house itself. Past the flowers and lush environment that surrounded the home. There was this tree that had an hidden compartment. A door in fact that had to be carved out at some point.

When Molly slipped inside of it she discovered just how much room was in there. A third person could fit if they had brought anyone. “Why is this your favorite spot?”

“It’s quiet.”

This Molly hum thoughtfully. “Is it loud here normally?”

“He throws parties. It’s how he knows who is out to hurt someone. He built this for me one time when it was just the two of us. A safe place so that no one would bother me, and I wouldn’t be in harms way.”

He cared about him. Molly smiled. Of course she had hoped that he did but this had certainly proved it.

“What’s your second favorite spot?” She asked after sitting in there for a little while. Miles took her hand again as he did often here and they left the tree for some place new.

Molly spent most of the day outside discovering new things about this place. She’d tackle the inside another day but she had to prepare for the night shift. The night shift that she hadn’t thought about all day because she was with Miles.

As she washed and got dressed she begun to worry about it. She would be close to Miles the entire time. That was what she was really here for but it still felt like there was something she hadn’t realized yet.

By the time she had finished preparing herself she could hear several voices down below and outside her window. The real guests had arrived. She stopped herself from looking out the window to see what they were like. She knew what these people were like - in truth they had the same makeup. It wouldn’t be hard to address them if she had to. Though she desperately preferred not to.

Miles was waiting for her on the steps in a nice three piece suit. He looked very handsome and she told him so. “I like your dress.” He complimented her back with a redness to his cheeks.

“Thank you.” She smiled at him as she ruffled his hair. His curls were still as messy as ever. The other curly haired man soon joined them from down the stairs.

“Join us, won’t you?” He had some apprehensiveness about his face but he did sort of smile. It was small but necessary. Necessary for him, she supposed. She already had enough nerves in her body to energize an entire street.

Molly nodded and asked Miles for his arm. He gave her an odd look. “It’s customary, for a man to take a lady’s arm when escorting them to an event.” Sherlock encouraged him with a chuckle. His face brightening before sliding over to Molly who looked amused as well. This was something they both agreed on.

“OK.” He muttered before wrapping his short arm around one of Molly’s. Sherlock went on ahead as Molly took the steps slowly so that Miles was with her.

When they got down there they were meet by a sea of people. There had to be twenty bodies in total but in the room it seems like so much more. Molly took a deep breath as Sherlock addressed the room.
He cleared his throat before speaking. “Welcome all to tonight’s festivities. Sometimes you just need to be around familiar face. that’s what’s tonight’s about for me. I hope you enjoy yourselves.” Molly admired how even when Sherlock said very little he seemed to have the room’s attention. She could never do that. Her voice unless agitated wasn’t strong enough to address such a large group of people.

He had turned back to where Molly stood off to the side with Miles. “I always hate doing that.” He said to her quietly enough that she was the only one to hear it.

“Then why do you throw these parties?”

In response he only smiled at her. “I’ll tell you later. I have to mingle. C’mon Miles, you’re my wing-man.” The tall detective gathered the boy at his side and they were soon off to speak with everyone in the room starting from the left and circling around.

This left Molly completely alone. Something she had been falsely assured wouldn’t happen. She was supposed to be with Miles. Miles was now with Sherlock. Her shield had a dent in it and she couldn’t possibly fathom why now of all times it had to happen. There were just so many of them. All of them decided that she needed to be stared at. Not in a nice way either, they all looked disturbed by her appearance - whether that was because of her state of dress or the fact that she was an anomaly. She had no clue.

One woman in particular was basically glaring at her. Molly was quick to look away and started looking about the room. She was a very beautiful woman who had to be near Sherlock’s age with tanned skin. Her hair fell in waves. Unlike Molly’s dress which was nice (a navy dress with black beading around the bust) and her only evening wear to boot, the woman wore an fiery red dress that accentuated her curves with black pumps that had to be over an inch over the height that Molly was comfortable with wearing heels. Instead of focusing on any of this she started to walk about the room. It looked completely different from the day before. They had gotten rid of the furniture that was in the way apart from the large chair that was by the fire the previous night. It actually reminded her of the set of chairs in 221 B. She was sure it wasn’t a coincidence.

Sherlock was habit driven. If the clutter of his life at home had anything to go by.

The chandelier in the center of the room was the main light source while little Christmas lights were strung up all along the room to give it a more intimate setting. There was also a clear view of the outside door that would take you to the grounds in the back where Molly and Miles spent ample time yesterday.

Molly felt the urge to just slip out. Miles was with someone who she trusted with him (Sherlock) and she felt like she needed some fresh air. However after indulging in some punch - not champagne even though she really needed it at this point she had been blocked from the door. A group of three women which including the bombshell who had been giving her such ill attention (i.e. glaring).

She desperately wanted to escape so that she wouldn’t have to deal with this again. She didn’t seem to have a choice - yet. So she politely smiled and spoke a meek greeting of ‘hello’.

The brunette who she had been avoiding spoke up first. “Who are you?”

Oh.

It hit Molly like a brick wall to the face. This woman wasn’t merely curious - she was the jealous sort of curious. She hadn’t ever had this experience before. Why would anyone be jealous of her? She was merely a medical student who collected wages from an arrogant detective for looking after a boy
who may or may not be his biologically.

She wondered if they knew that, and if they did had they been told the history that she was still trying to uncover herself?

A part of her thought not. Sherlock Holmes was exclusively a no woman man who doesn’t share his personal life with anyone. Especially if someone could use it against him. It’s why he could be such a jerk at times. He didn’t want to let anyone in.

Not her - even though she told herself she didn’t want to go there, not anybody.

She tried not to look as amused as she felt when answering the question. “Me? I’m nobody really. Sorry if you got the wrong impression.” She allowed a chuckle to escape, it turned out to be more nervous stricken than ha-ha funny.

The woman who was yet to give her name continued to give off the superior vibe to Molly who wasn’t one to back down or hide despite how uncomfortable she was.

She did attempt to look for Miles but the two lackeys had a thing for snapping and insisted that she kept her eyes on what was being said to her. “Janine is trying to find the truth here and you’re being awfully naive.” The blonde on the right practically shrieked.

“Sorry, um, that’s not the best way to use that word - naive - and I’m actually a bit busy tonight so whatever this is about it will need to be dealt with at a later time.”

Again, Molly tried to move around them from the opposite direction that she had attempted the first time; the right the last was at the left. Same result. No avail.

Molly let out a sigh trying to stay as calm as she possibly could. At first she had been nervous about this confrontation but her thoughts about it had shifted. Her annoyance was creeping in hard and fast. Why was it so hard for women to let little things like this go? She wasn’t involved with Sherlock in any way that didn’t concern the well being of her charge. The rest was non-existent.

They were painfully insistent.

Sherlock on the other hand found the people to be tolerable more than anything else. He had gotten through half the room before anything perked his attention on a genuine level. Most of the regular people merely greeted him and thanked him for the invitation along with a few questions about his work and fewer about his family. More than half of these people he invited were family friends and business associates who expected to be invited. He had learned years ago it was best to get on with it than have to get an angry letter or phone call because someone didn’t make the list.

It was exhausting but necessary.

Sherlock & Miles were about to make nice with some very energetic women when he realized their attention was on something else - correction someone else.

It didn’t take him very long to figure who and why. He felt like a complete imbecile too. She was his reason for this particular occasion. To leave her completely unguarded when there were people like Janine Hawkins. In reality she was harmless but she did want something from him. Something that he couldn’t give her or anyone in this current room as far as he could tell.

Affection .

It was much more than that though. She wanted all his attention.
Molly Hooper from every spot in the room had been seen coming down the stairs with him and the familiar face of Miles. In all actuality there was nothing wrong with this apart from the aspect that she was from the female persuasion.

He moved closer to the four women while also keeping a distance as to not draw attention to the fact he was about to do anything. He ended up in a corner with Miles. He bent down to him after finally getting a decent look at his tutor.

Molly had seemed more irritated than afraid of the scene that was being made. She barely said anything from what he gathered she was against giving the other three what they wanted. In a strange twist of fate, this would be a blessing in disguise. He wouldn’t have to do as much to get things to go he needed them. He hated scandals or the implication of one.

He was sure this was about information. It was directly about him per say but it did still concern him. He had already read the fact that Molly had already realized this too, hence her need to say as little as possible. He had an inkling she hadn’t even told them her name. Good girl.

“I need your help with something.” He whispered to the young boy who looked quite eager at the prospect of being some assistance to the detective. There were only a few times where he had asked him for it. None of it had been dangerous. He wouldn’t put him in that type of situation, ever. It was a promise he made long ago.

“Is it about Molly?” Sherlock had to fight down a chuckle. He had started to feel like Miles might be the one with the crush on Molly. It was somewhere close to admiration he’d say.

“Partly, yes. I need you to ask her to dance.”

Miles’ face expressed revulsion at the request. “Why would I do that?”

Perhaps admiration was stronger than the crush at this point. He smiled. “Because she needs our help. You distract her - take her outside for a dance while I get the lioness.”

He could tell the young child didn’t fully understand what was going on but he decided to help anyways. Sherlock waited until Molly had bent down to talk with Miles to throw his plan into motion. When he got behind Janine he spoke directly as she still tried to keep the young girl where she stood. “She’s working. Let her be.”

Molly gave him a grateful look before rushing off with Miles. Sherlock gestured for the other two women to leave them alone for a moment. They did only after Janine gave a nod of consent. “Who do you mean working?”

“It shouldn’t bother you so much. Molly - that’s her name by the way is here for Miles but she doubles as a personal guest. You’d be well to not pick fights over something so irrelevant.”

She rolled her eyes at him with earned her a grin from Sherlock. She didn’t want it. “If she’s so irrelevant why is she such an esteemed guest?”

Sherlock waited a moment before admitting the truth. “You like secrets, yes?” When she nodded with immense reluctance he gave it to her. “You’re not why I threw this party. You may think so seeing as you’re always present when I do. I am nice to you. I do that for everyone I allowed entrance into my home. It does not single you out. However crushing that may sound my intention is clear. Don’t meddle in my affairs and don’t badger my people for information that you could have easily gotten from the horses mouth so to speak.” He paused, touched her shoulder - a pat before expressing that he hoped she had an enjoyable rest of the night.
He could feel her heart hit the ground as he passed her to get the side door where Molly had just exited. He stayed at the door and looked at the duo before him in the grass. They were dancing as per his request.

Molly smiling and giggling as Miles held her hands - he was standing barefoot on her feet as she led the dance. She too had forgone her footwear. They both looked so free. Miles looked like he was enjoying it too. He was even speaking to her about something enthusiastically that continued to make her laugh. It must have been something funny.

Her eyes closed when she was deep in hysteric of it all. She looked so at peace that it had become increasingly difficult to return inside but he had to for a little while. In hindsight he realized that his plan had worked in part. Molly was enjoying herself. Even if the reason wasn’t entirely because of him. It was still enough for him.

John stood there waiting for him when he did.

“Why haven’t you told her yet?” Sherlock grumbled. “I don’t know which confession you’re talking about.”

“Surely, the bit where you’ve started to fancy her? Maybe even…” He started to say but Sherlock shot him a hot glare. John laughed.

“You’re not funny. I think I would know if I was falling in love with anybody.” His best friend made a noise. “You’ve also defended her while also not giving away the true secret of all of this.” John gestured with his hands. “Fine. I’ll let you come to it on your own terms. I forgot how stubborn you are.”

Sherlock just shook his head before re-entering the throngs of people who were still having a decent time inside.

At the end of the dance Molly and Miles took to sitting on the steps of the porch instead of going back inside. “Do you ever get used to this?” She wondered looking at Miles who was catching his breath. He had a flush to his cheeks.

“What cha mean?” That familiar look of confusion had surfaced once again. She smoothed down the back of his hair which had gotten much more wild than usual thanks to the dampness that had collected there through the humidity of the air outside.

Molly had been thankful she had taken off her cardigan before their dance. She too wouldn’t have made it.

The boy didn’t move away from her touch which made her feel happy as she inquired more closely. “Mr. Holmes’ parties. His frequent trips away. Does it ever get any easier to deal with?” There were two separate reason as to why she was asking this. The first being her worry for the boy who seemed to like his caretaker enough to be delighted when he showed favor in him and doted on him in his own way.

“it doesn’t feel any different to me really. He’s always been this way. I’m not bothered.”

Molly’s lips were pursed as she thought about it. How was it so simple for him? If she had the chance to know her father the way Miles knew Sherlock she would never had been able to cope with his death. But, she didn’t have the luxury of doing so. She only had the memories of a two year old who only remembered a man who constantly held her. A man who wore funny glasses - that she later learned were safety goggles - all the time and messed with odd liquids.
“Why did you want to know that Miss Hooper?” Miles carried a much less overwhelming curiosity than the detective. It was refreshing.

“I just worry I suppose.” That was the truth of the matter.

They sat there until the loudness had died down and with the end of the night. Miles had ended up falling asleep on Molly’s shoulder. John had come out to check on them as Sherlock was saying goodnight and goodbye to the last remaining few guests.

He gestured to the boy considering if he should either wake him up on pick him up so that he could take him to his room.

Molly shook her head, whispering, “I got it.”

John crouched down before her. He wanted to talk to her for a tic. “Did you enjoy yourself?” Molly knew that John was concerned after what happened with Miss Janine Hawkins. He didn’t need to be. There were worse threats than a woman scorned by someone who had no idea what was going on either.

She waved him off as best she could. “It was lovely. I spent a lot times out here. It would have been better outside.” She joked.

“I’ll remember that for the next one.” Sherlock stated from behind them.

Molly couldn’t very well turn but John got to his feet.

Sherlock stayed behind her and Miles. He didn't say anything for a few beats which ultimately left Molly to open up the floor. She decided to ask about his enjoyment during the night, because she knew not from experience but from observing that hosting was a full time job.

“Did you enjoy yourself this evening, Mister Holmes?”

She heard him let out a sigh before answering. “I suppose I did. It didn’t go exactly as I planned but these things never do.”

She wanted to ask if it was because of the scene she was involved in but she wasn’t sure how or why that mattered. She guessed in part it was her own confusion about what it had been about. She stayed quiet instead.

“We should take him inside.” He said after awhile. Molly agreed. She allowed Sherlock to take Miles into his arms so that she could get up. She gathered their shoes and Miles’ coat that he had taken off awhile ago and followed Sherlock inside.

They bypassed John who was sitting down by the fire to get to Miles’ room. Molly flicked on the light and let Sherlock get him in bed. He gestured for Molly to go ahead and do the rest as he had figured that was what she wanted to do in the first place. She shot him a small smile as she moved around him to begin taking Miles’ tie off and unbuttoning the first few buttons so that he would be able to breathe as he slept. She decided to take off his socks too, if only so he wouldn’t be overwhelming hot in the night. Finally, she drew the blanket that had been sitting at the foot of the bed over him.

Molly turned around to head out where she noticed that Sherlock was still there admiring her as she worked. She drew in an uneasy breath not expecting him to still be there. Staring.

She shook her head at him. “What?” He called as he closed the door halfway.
“You’re a bit scary at times.” He couldn’t seem to deny it as they walked down the hall.

Sherlock left her at the end of the staircase with a short “Good night, Miss Hooper.” Molly blinked at him before heading up to her room.

A bit later Sherlock was once again faced with Molly Hooper’s presence. He was sure that she had gone to bed upstairs. Instead he found her asleep in his chair next to the fire. She had come down for water and a short interval of reading form a text that was titled ‘Mysterious Illnesses and Less Known Cures.’

His brow raised at that. She was trying to be a pathologist. What need did she have of cures? The answer should have been obvious but he was once again stricken by another distraction.

Fire.

Sherlock quickly ran for the bucket of water that was sitting in between the two chairs. It had once been ice. No matter it was what he needed. He moved in one swift motion and dumped the bucket full at Molly's feet where the embers were starting grow bigger and climb.

Molly woke spluttering in shock.

“What the hell?”

“Saving your phalanges.” He sighed as he pulled the rest of the blanket off her. She wouldn’t be stupid enough to bring a lengthy throw near a fire. That only left the idiocy of his best friend.

Molly noticed how pissed off he looked. “Don’t blame him.” She had already figured out where his anger was starting to be directed at. “It’s my fault for falling asleep near it. Anybody would have covered me with a blanket so I wasn’t cold.”

Molly got to her feet, only to stumble back down. Her right foot ached. She brought it up onto the chair to inspect it. It sung but didn’t appear to have been charred or burnt in the slightest. Sherlock too moved to take a closer look. Molly swatted his hand before he could try to touch it.

“I’m fine.” She claimed. By the look on his face he wasn’t exactly buying it.

“you’re hurt.” He argued. “I’m getting John.” Before she could stop him he was rushing up the steps.

She yelled after him, “Don’t hit him. I know you’re angry…” She trailed off worried more about the surgeon than the fact that she might have been wrong. The flames had to have licked at her toes for it to feel so tender. Even so she hoped Sherlock would never be drawn to doing such a thing but from what she knew he had been rash before. It really wasn’t that serious. She just needed a basin of water and some ointment at the most.

John explained this too before getting everything they needed as Sherlock moved Molly to the bathroom on the ground floor for ease of treating her. He also informed her that he would move her things down to the ground floor as well as to to have an easier time as she healed. Molly thought he was being utterly stupid. She didn’t tell him that but, John joined her in a discussion about it while Sherlock was out of the room.

“He’s always been so stubborn. However, I think this has to do with the last time he wasn’t quick enough to save someone. He needs someone to blame. I’m alright if it’s me.”

“Wait, what happened the last time? Who couldn’t he save?”
John let out a sigh as he wrapped her toes.

“Miles’ mother.” He whispered quietly.

Sherlock entered the room then with a look on his face that seemed to give away entirely too much. She didn’t know what to say to him. She was fully aware that she was in shock but she was doing her best to not let it show as much as she was feeling it more than anything else. She had been told - one of which was from Sherlock - that she wore her heart on her person. Sometimes it was her face or just something else that gives her away to someone.

In contrast Sherlock was the opposite. He said what he thought no matter how it sounded to everybody else. At this new revelation that Molly was unsure that she was aware of it. He did seem to have figured out something. Then he changed just as quickly. His face hardened as he bent down to her level. He looked at John. Someone who clearly wasn’t Molly out of the two of them; he wouldn’t look at her.

He had been dreading this moment for a long time. Ever since he noticed that he cared that she cared about Miles. He thought he would be by now but he hadn’t made a plan. He planned for this night; the party but it hadn’t occurred to him that this would follow up that. The fire and now the truth.

“You done?” Sherlock spoke.

John peered up at Molly for a moment. She just looked at him blankly as if she herself wasn’t sure what to do or what she wanted. “Yeah.”

This was the weird portion of whatever was going on here and Molly felt it tenfold. She just rose and picked her up before walking out of the room.

“You don’t have to carry me, Sherlock.” He paused in his walking and looked down at her. He hesitated before letting her know his truth, “I feel better if I do, besides you might slow me down.” He grinned partially.

Molly didn’t know what was so funny about that but she smiled at him anyways. Maybe they didn’t have to talk about it tonight. She decided that she was even more curious about the relationship between Miles and Sherlock. She had a short answer, and in order to finish this night off she would say goodnight and that would be it. That was Molly’s plan.

Like Sherlock’s, it didn’t exactly work out the way she wanted it to. Once he transferred her to the bed in the downstairs room he closed the door and sat at the foot of the bed. He was at least five steps away from where her legs rested. His back was to her, but she could see the movement of him fidgeting.

When Molly just stared at him, he finally mentioned it. “You’re not going to ask?”

Molly bit her lip. “Not right now.” This seemed to frustrate him. He turned slightly so that he was facing her in part.

“Why not?”

“I’m not ready to.”

He opened his mouth to ask again but she cut him off immediately. “Mr. Holmes I’ve had a long night.” Let me sleep, she thought even thought she was sure she wouldn’t be sleeping much after he left her. Her mind was racing in the worst way right now. She couldn’t figure out why he was
determined to try to talk about it right now. She wasn’t going to make him do it. She didn’t need to
know that badly.

Okay. That was a lie.

He let out a sigh. “Let me know when. Sleep well, Miss Hooper.”

Molly flapped back on the pillow and tried not to scream. He was giving her the option to start the
collection. With anyone else that would be comforting but not with so much riding on it. Most
particularly the way he was desperate to tell her. She was beginning to think that not that many
people knew the truth. Yet all of those that he surrounded themselves with these two gentlemen -
Miles & Sherlock - seemed to care about him immensely. Perhaps it helped to know what happened
to her.

Molly eventually went to sleep but it was uncomfortable for her to sleep in this bed. She couldn’t
believe how much a difference one bed on an upper floor would make.

John was sitting out in the hallways when she decided to come out for the day. From the clock in the
room it was the afternoon. She frowned at him. “How long have you been sitting there.”

“How long have you been sitting there.”

Since morning tea.” He huffed. “He’s ridiculously concerned. You can clearly walk.” He looked at
her foot that was still wrapped up. How funny to feel conscious of your toes at a time like this, Molly
thought. There wasn’t any varnish on them and she was in need of a trip to the nail parlor. She hadn’t
gone since three years ago. She didn’t much care for the vanity of it all but it was nice to get your
toes shorted and she couldn’t deny the lotion they used on your legs to soften them didn’t feel great,
and smell divine too.

She leaned on the door, clutching her toiletries that she needed to brush her teeth as she had already
struggled through getting dressed from her bed. There had been a funny dance going on behind the
door as she got ready. She was surprised that if John had been waiting that long that he didn’t hear
her fall on and off the bed a few handful of times.

Ignoring this, she came back to the conversation at hand. “I didn’t die.” She admitted with a wry
smile.

“He’s a bull. It’s almost like you almost did. I fear if it had it would have permanently wrecked him.”

Molly scoffed. John was a funny man. “What makes you say that Doctor Watson?”

“John, please. Well he does care for you. More than you know.”

Molly shook her head. That was absolutely preposterous.

Wasn’t it?

John followed Molly to the bathroom. It was mostly from a doctor standpoint than the fact that
Sherlock had asked it of him while he went out with Miles for a bit. He hadn’t asked where they
were going. There were many things they could do in the village. His initial thought had been that
they would be going out to retrieve something. Again, he didn’t know what but if he asked Miles to
come along and hadn’t shared what had happened with Molly the previous night; the fire. It was
possible that he valued the boy’s opinion on something. Thus it had to do with Molly Hooper herself.

He noticed how stressed it made her at the thought that Sherlock might like her in a less than
professional manner. So he decided to let whatever happened to do just that.
It did make him wonder what her stance on his best friend was.

Last night she appeared increasingly annoyed at him, but she had a proper reason for that. Sherlock was ridiculous when distressed about something. Especially if it involved someone he cared for in any regard. It was just another sign into what he had informed him of before the fire. There was something about this young girl that made him brash and an idiot at the same time. Also, made him think several moments later.

When Molly was settled back in a bed for the night he had informed him: first that he was sorry for what he had said to him. There wasn’t that many times that Sherlock had done this - apologizing so quickly. He usually has a reason for it. John wasn’t wrong about that assumption either. He immediately followed it up with asking him to keep Molly company this morning.

Normally, he would at least try to get out of it. But, he too had his reasons for going along with it.

John was a simple man and as such his motives followed suit in the same fashion. He wanted to know what Molly was about. There had to be something obvious about her. John decided to find out what that was.

So they sat down for a spot of tea and sandwiches. It was a small lunch but Molly didn’t appear to be that hungry. She had loaded her saucer with two of the sandwiches to go along with her tea.

John had propped Molly’s foot up on a pillow on the sofa leaving him to pick the chair. He didn’t mind. It wasn’t too big that it swallowed him whole.

“What’s up Doc - John?” She corrected herself. It was hard to get used to it. She felt like she barely knew him but at the same time she could read him just as easily as anyone else she came across. She supposed that was her gift.

John chuckled, waving it off. “What do you do, Molly? When you’re not hanging around those two?”

Molly smiled. It was refreshing to get to talk about herself rather than someone already knowing it before she even say anything.

“I’m a student. Med school. You’re familiar with that aren’t you?”

“A bit, yes. I was in the military thought as well so a bit different.”

“Army doctor?” She questioned.

He nodded. “It was a long time ago. Now I do surgeries and the like. It’s not a bad way to spend my time. I suppose you aren’t doing that though…” He trailed off.

Molly thought him to be a different change from the intimidating sort she was used to. He was less but somehow still very approachable and lovely to talk to.

“Not at all. I could probably help with that eventually but my area of study is pathology.”

John made a noise. Surprised. A young girl who wanted to cut up dead bodies. It was different for him. Unheard of in his day.

He reaction made Molly laugh though. “You’re not so different than the others whenever I say that. I think the only person who wasn’t off put was Sherlock. Then again he had a file on me. So…”
“I’m not surprised that he is okay with Miles’ tutor being a future pathologist. He always says there is trouble finding a decent one.”

Molly could only wonder what illegal shenanigans Sherlock would get into with a good pathologist. Chemical spills would be the least of her worries if she was still around during that time. Madness would certainly ensue.

“I imagine so. I have another job besides this one. Working in a lab. They gave me off the week. Sherlock did something.

John chuckled. They were supposed to be sharing about each other but instead it came back to that ridiculous sod.

“Between him and Mycroft - his older brother - there are lots of things that can happen suddenly.” Molly could tell that there was plenty that she still needed to learn about Sherlock Holmes and his life. She hadn’t figured out a decent enough reason to want to but she could admit he made a very curious woman out of her.

“You know he was very adamant that it was a coincidence that Mrs. Hudson found you out of all the applicants he had been looking into.”

Molly’s nose twitched. “Why is that important? We don’t get along that well to begin with.”

John for the first time felt like he was the one with the clever hat on and it was amazing. “Ah, but things are changing. At least for him. Abhorred by that as much as he is you’re making him less foolish.”

Molly didn’t see how. She hadn’t changed anything about herself. Sure she had let her guard down more often, but did that warrant a change in someone else? Especially Sherlock. She hadn’t been that way around him. Only Miles.

Miles was the key though wasn’t he? He was the special person in their lives. This young boy who struggled in maths and sciences did something to those around him. She wondered if he even realize it.

Was he of the same cloth of his master? No, Molly rejected that idea.

Miles was silently sweet and held a warmth that she was positive he wasn’t aware that he had. When she initially met him she had thought he didn’t like her. He hadn’t made any gestures of liking her in any way but then he started to ask her questions that had little to do with his school work and more to do with what she enjoyed and she began to realize perhaps he just needed a way in. She had only given him an inch wanting to focus on what she was there to do - teach him but somewhere along the way she had become completely immersed in him. A startling contrast to his guardian.

Yet, it was now talking to someone who knew them both so well that it hit her that they were one in this same. Even with how different they were. They both seemed to want the same thing. To know her. Molly couldn’t quite decide Sherlock’s motives for wanting to know her but if by finding out his one secret helped her understand she’d give him some girth with her.

Staying with the line of thought she needed more intel herself.

“What did you think when you first met Miles?”

John looked baffled by this line of question. He blinked for a few seconds, scratching his head before answering. “He was a toddler when I met him. So innocence, I suppose. That and the fact that
Sherlock looked so taken with him. You have to understand that it was a different time back then.” John stopped abruptly though. “I can’t say anymore about it. You’ll understand when you talk with him about what happened.”

That certainly put a damper on Molly’s spirits. She had hoped she was finally getting somewhere. She was the foolish one.

She let out a sigh before smiling at the man. “It must be important.”

He nodded. “It’s a very large piece to the puzzle.”

---

Sherlock on the other hand was feeling quite moody. It could be the fact that he was standing in front of a grave. Could be merely due to what had transpired over night. His thoughts were jumbled into bits of memories and things that hadn’t happened yet.

Currently his thoughts drifted from the grave to the other person who was with him. Miles who was back to his normal clothes wore a half tired expression riddled with the same somber one that the older man mirrored.

Sherlock hadn’t spoken since telling him to join him for a walk. The boy had to know at some point they would end up here again. It was in part why they still visited the village at all. Besides the parties of course.

Sherlock let out a sigh as he heard the familiar sniffling coming from Miles. This was one of the things that crushed his cold heart. Seeing him this way was a constant reminder of how much had happened. Losing the only person you had and not being able to do anything about it was doubly worse for a child who had been much too young to understand what was happening. At the time the detective had to be the quickest he had ever been when it came to dealing with it.

He was the only one who could have made it better for him. It also helped that he knew him.

Sherlock reached out and slipped his arm around Miles’ shoulder and pulled him into his side. Clearing his throat so that he could talk normally. “Is there anything you want to tell her?”

Miles turned fully into the detective’s coat hiding his tear stained face. His voice was muffled but Sherlock understood him perfectly. “That I wish she was here. That she’d really like Miss Hooper. That I’m okay.” His voice broke off as he squeezed Sherlock tightly around the middle as he began sobbing all over again.

The detective patted the boys head, holding him close to him.

“Yeah, she would have.” He spoke to him as he sniffed. Crying was something that was better shared together.

Before leaving the duo made sure to leave the flowers that they had taken this morning from the garden. They had been her favorite.

Miles and Sherlock stuck around the graveyard for a little while as they settled down. Mostly Miles but Sherlock had time to get a hold on his emotions too. He still needed to figure out how to tell him about Molly or Miss Hooper as he often and affectionately referred to her. He didn’t have the right time until they entered a sweets shop.

Sherlock had a habit of spoiling Miles. IN part it was due to guilt for not being around so much but
in this case Sherlock had filled half a bag of licorice for himself.

When Miles asked about if he knew what Molly would like, Sherlock just blinked at him. “How would I know?” When Miles just smiled at him, Sherlock let out a sigh. “Alright. I assume something sweet. That doesn’t exactly narrow things down, but let’s see if there’s something with cherries or strawberries in it. From what I’ve noticed at least scent wise she has a liken for these kinds. If we don’t find anything like that you can’t go wrong with chocolate.”

Miles replied in kind, “I want it to be something special. You can get chocolate anywhere.”

Sherlock tried not to roll his eyes at the boy. This was going to take some time. They ended up surveying the whole store before they found something that was just the right amount of special. Sherlock ended up purchasing a few cherries dipped in varying types of chocolate. He wasn’t sure how it would taste but it wouldn’t hurt to try it out. Trial and error was something he was fond of.

They took the long way back to the house. There were ducks and birds along the pond and Miles liked to feed them so Sherlock had made sure to bring some bread along. It was a sigh to continuously carry along a bag of bread but not too strange. There were a few kids already feeding them when they arrived.

“We can come back if you want.” He suggested.

Miles just took the bag from Sherlock in exchange for his treats (his and Miss Hooper’s) and then took off. The mothers eyed him with curiosity and desire. The latter which he ignored. He smiled as he usually did when someone was staring at him. Then he shifted his gaze on Miles who was chatting with one of the other girls who was further down the way. He decided to give him some room before stepping in.

He felt a bit awkward standing there doing nothing so he took out his phone. He had several messages from his brother and a few short voice-mails from his parents. He would have to listen to them another time. He clicked on the first message from his bother. The subject line was direct and straight to the point.

Subject: VISIT

Mummy told me you were in the village for one of your gatherings. Peculiar who’s in your company. I’ll be expecting you when you return. Say hello to Miss Hooper for me. John as well, I suppose.

- M.H.

Sherlock huffed, pocketing his phone. He didn’t need to look at the others. They were likely to run down the same path. He shouldn’t have been as surprised as he was that Mycroft knew that Molly was here. Mycroft knew everything. It felt like he wanted to get in touch with Molly about something. Perhaps it was the very thing he had attempted to talk to her about last night. His brother was of the sort that wanted to either lay everything on the table or avoid doing so to protect him. Depending on just how much he knew of their interactions with each other would decide on what he wanted to do, and whether he wanted to intervene in the long scheme of things.

He couldn’t think of that now, however. Instead he moved over to the side where Miles was now.
Miles was sharing his bread with the girl next to him who was both poor and had run out of her own. He looked up at Sherlock who gave him a nod of approval. It was something that his mother would have done.

Once the bread was dispersed to the animals Miles was ready to go. Before they headed back down to the path to the house Sherlock stopped next to the little girl who Miles had been enjoying a moment with mother and passed her a note. He took Miles’ hand before she could hand it back to him and disappeared.

The woman looked after the man and smiled. He had handed her 50 quid wrapped around a piece of paper that he happened have tucked in his pocket. The words ‘Dinner is on me.’ He didn’t sign it but odds are the woman knew who he was.

He had been correct in this assumption. When the daughter asked who he was she just smiled.

“Sherlock Holmes. The man they claim doesn’t have a heart.”

When they arrived back to the house Miles waited for confirmation from Sherlock when he saw Molly sitting on the sofa by John. Sherlock realized he hadn’t told him about the fire incident, but nodded anyways.

Miles went over running with the candy in tow. Sherlock watched them from afar observing as Molly took one of the cherries out of the bag and plopped it into her mouth. She shut her eyes for effect. Making noises of delight. He heard her express gratitude, “Thanks. They are delicious. I’ll try not to eat them all in one sitting.” She giggled.

Sherlock decided to sit outside for a bit while the three of them mingled affectionately. The very last thing he heard was Miles’ very concerned voice. He smiled as he took a seat on the same steps that Molly and Miles had also used the previous night.

He let out a sigh as he pulled his mobile from his pocket. As much as he loathed to admit it he had a certain urge to call someone in his family. As it were he needed an outside perspective.

It wasn’t shame for who he was or what he had done. As of yet he had never felt any of that. Things happened and he ran with it. He questioned things yes but never himself. Everything he had done had a solid reason behind it and he would never go back on anything he had said or done. It wouldn’t change the outcome. It had happened and it had made him better in the end. This is what he told himself; what he believed. And yet, there was one thing that he questioned repeatedly.

Death.

He had always questioned it. Not necessarily in the dramatic fashion as a family would when they lost someone. But, from a logical standpoint. Why and how did it happen? Who had done it?

There had only been one time that he found himself acting in the other manner and it was his childhood dog. REDBEARD.

This was not about Redbeard. It was about the other person. The one who was always there reminding him of where he had failed.

He listened to the dialing of the call with baited breath and eyes closed. When she immediately started talking he found himself not being aggravated by her for the first time but he wanted her to know that he needed her help. In ways only she could.
“Mummy…” his voice was quiet and broken and for the first time he hadn’t given a damn.

Bless her soul. She quieted down and asked about him. He used to loathe this until he realized how useful she was. How wonderful it all was.

Inside Molly was amused by Miles who had noticed that her leg was propped up. He had been so focused on handling over the chocolates that he hadn’t realized that she was injured. In truth she didn’t want to treat it like it was a huge deal.

It had happened and she knew what her limitations were while she recovered but she didn’t see it as some significant issue. The men (and boy) around her were treating it as such. It was very unusual for her. She had gotten used to depending on herself - and not having someone who really cared as much. These people did. It was endearing really.

In the case of Miles she didn’t want him to worry. He hadn’t been that hurt. It was a scratch in comparison to what it could have been.

She smiled at him patting his curls in a way to get him to settle.

“I’m alright. I promise. I just fell.”

She thought it was better if he not know the truth of it. She had hurt herself in what happened to make her fall down afterwards. It was probably one of the lamest tales she had ever spun but his concern had diminished just a tiny bit. That was enough for her.

To add on to this web of lies, she added a simple truth. “Mr. Holmes was there, and John helped me as well so you don’t have to be so worried.”

“This means we can’t go out to the park like I planned though.” He frowned.

John piped up. “I think we can do it tomorrow. It’ll take most of the day for me to create something that will help.”

What John had in mind was fairly simple. A wheelchair. He had to go a favor for the local clinic but they got to use it for the next day. The kicker for Molly at least was the fact that Sherlock was the one who decided to wheel her around. Molly could of course do it herself. She knew how to use one - previous medical situation where she had fallen from a tree. A dare gone wrong involving girls who didn't like her. It was Molly's way of getting them off her back.

She could admit that it was nice to have someone doing something for her. Although, it felt a bit awkward. He wasn't saying anything. Molly knew this mostly because she had chosen to look up at him and it was only then that she realized that he was facing straight forward. In this way he was effectively ignoring her, or so it appeared.

In all actuality Sherlock was trying to not openly stare at her continuously. It was at this moment that he looked down at her when he felt her eyes trained on him. He could read the confusion on her face. He was sure he spotted a brief tinge of color on her face before she looked away.

His brow arched at that.

Was it embarrassment at being caught or was it something else entirely?

He waited a few moments before speaking to her. In front of them John and Miles were happily
unaware of the torment that the detective was going through. “Molly.” He began.

Once again she leaned her head up to look at him. “Hm?” She hummed before turning to look ahead. They were fairly close to the park but Sherlock had been walking with Molly at a leisure pace.

“You're staring.”

“What?” She moved to one side, shifting.

“At me.” He continued, “I felt it.”

Molly didn't know where he was going with it but at least he was talking to her. The silence and sudden leaving of the room after leaving Miles with her had made her worry. What was going on with him? She had tried to get something out of John but the man just shrugged, unsure what to think of it beyond what was supposedly obvious to everyone. Sherlock fancying her. She still wasn't sure about that.

“So…” She trailed off.

“So as far as I've observed you're not keen or staring blatantly at someone. You detest anyone who does it at you. You're self-conscious. You feel inadequate, you shouldn't but you do. Yet, you're staring at me. Why is that?” Somewhere in his monologue of deductions he had stopped them.

They were at the cusp of the pond. A few people milled around it. Molly couldn't figure on it. Sherlock had her greatly distracted by what he had collected of her. What else had he observed about her?

“Staring isn't a crime. You haven't spoken to me in a few days. Two to be exact. That's why I was staring at you.” Molly was honest with him.

“I wasn't aware I had to say anything to you.” Molly could detect the lie before he came to stand in front of her. His back was turned to her. Strange.

“Common courtesy, Mister Holmes. Besides you're a horrible liar.”

“Actually it's one of my better talents, Miss Hooper.” He stressed her name.

“Who told you that? I can see right through you.” Sherlock frowned. He had noticed that already. She was very perspective. It was something he liked about her, though she put him in his place more times than he liked. From Miles’ perspective that's how you knew she didn't completely hate you.

“People…” He said. Another half truth. His brother had said it was going to get him in trouble someday. He hardly thought that counted in Molly's mind. So he opted out of telling her that.

“They were liars themselves.” She stated before placing her hand on the wheels, and backing up and then around him. She didn't miss the way he looked shocked to seeing her do it herself. “I fell out of a tree.” She shrugged as he hurried to catch up with her. She wasn't going incredibly fast. Sherlock had just been halted for a good minute in shock.

The rest of the day and the few left on this small vacation were spent in mirth. There were no more sad looks, or self pity for either party of detective and med student. It just was as it should be for the moment. Miles seemed to be the happiest of everyone.

He didn't say anything but he had seen the two mingling more than a few minutes at a time since the trip to the candy shop. He hoped they had gotten over what had made them so disconnected in the
The young boy just wasn't aware how fleeting things like this could be. Life as it were, changed as steadily as the seasons did.

Molly's life felt different coming back to London to her flat after being in the castle like home in Lincolnshire. Everything looked smaller, which had never been a problem before. She enjoyed her little space where she lived.

It took her about an hour after Sherlock dropped her off to figure it out - he offered to come with her inside since she had to carry her bag. He was still worried about her foot. It wasn't hurting as much as it had. It was probably nearly healed at this point. But she wouldn't be making the trek to her bedroom. Instead she dragged herself over to her couch, pulled the blanket that she kept there and fell into a slump.

The sound of a phone ringing somewhere nearby brought her back to the world at some point. Molly was completely out of it but she started to reach for the phone. She couldn't remember where it was the last time. Was it on the desk? Or in the kitchen? No. The annoying ring was coming from nearly next to her.

Her hand caught on the receiver and she pulled it off answering the call with a mumble. "Yeah?"

"Molly Hooper…” The distinct baritone startled her.

She tried to sit up only to fall back down. She wasn't feeling too great. "Sherlock? What's wrong?"

"You've been sleeping for two days."

What? Surely that wasn't right. She would move over to the calendar or the computer but she really felt like hell. "Um…” She was struggling to figure out what was real and what wasn't. "I didn't think I was that tired...wait how and why do you know I've been sleeping? That's creepy even for you Mister Detective."

There was silence on the other side of the line. It didn't last very long.

"Surveillance." He muttered. His voice was quiet as if he wasn't sure of what he was saying himself. "I keep an eye on the assets in my life. Friends…” He sounded weird saying that word. "My brother likes to do that."

"The illustrious other Holmes brother. That makes him even more creepier. Regardless, I don't like having eyes on me. It's the opposite of what you or he may be trying to do."

"I share the same sentiment…” He paused a moment. "How are you feeling? Miles wants to know. You missed yesterday."

Molly took a moment to figure out what day yesterday was supposed to be? Tuesday, if she had indeed been sleeping for two days. Which meant that she missed the tutoring session and work on Monday. She let out a groan. "I'm so fired…” She whispered to herself forgetting for a moment that her other employer was on the line.

"I'm not firing you.” Sherlock told her. She could hear a little puzzlement coming from him.

"Not you, my other job. The real job in the hospital.”
He hummed. “You don't have to worry about that. I took care of it.”

“Oh.” Molly breathed. He kept doing that.

“You didn't answer my question, Molly.”

“I dunno. I don't really feel well.” It was the truth. She certainly couldn't sit up for long period of time and she felt hot, unbearably so. Could be a fever?

Molly didn't hear from Sherlock after her admittance of feeling unwell. “Sherlock...what are you doing?” She could hear the sound of outside life, wind in particular.

“Taking a walk.” Even when they weren't in front of each other Molly could tell that he wasn't being absolutely honest with her.

“Taking a walk where?”

“Around town. Haven't stretched my legs in the city in quite awhile. I've missed it. Maybe next time it should just be a weekend affair to the village.”

Molly could detect a door shutting. He had just gone inside somewhere. “Sherlock are you in my building?” She had a very strong inkling he was. She couldn't really hear anything that would give him away but by the way he had been not telling her the right things (i.e. the truth) she felt as though he had to be right under her nose or at least close.

“Saying yes would get me into trouble. Saying no would also get me into trouble.”

Molly sighed. “I'm not letting you in. How did you get through the lobby door, it has a lock?”

“Think Miss Hooper, think.” He sounded greater amused which only annoyed the auburn haired woman to no end. She slowly pushed herself up into a sitting position. “It's the same way I'll get to you. My own personal skill set.” She heard the lock click after a few brief moments of him rattling at it. Lock picking was of his skill set. She should have not be surprised.

She placed the phone back on the receiver as she watched him close the door and lock it back. “I really hope you don't do that excessively.” She called to him just as he turned around and began to inspect her space.

His face which has been carrying a smile soon turned baffled and a bit ticked off as he moved towards her. His eyes didn't stop roaming what little he could see.

It soon got to a point where Molly just felt inclined to roll her eyes at him. “Come off it. You have money. I'm fine where I am.”

“I pay you enough that you could get something closer to what I live in.”

“Play back what I said.” She pinched the bridge of her nose.

“I'm clearly annoyed by what you said or I would have shut my mouth. But, yes, fine. I brought soup.” He added shortly before plopping down beside her.

It was then that Molly noticed that plastic bag. Sherlock opened it, holding out a tupper ware bowl with a orange lid with a silver spoon on top as well. Molly took it. “Homemade?”

“Mrs. Hudson. Turns out you're not the only one sick. Miles too.”
Molly ignored the soup for a second. “What's wrong with him?”

“Fever, I think. You're looking like you have one too.”

“You can't look at someone and tell what kind of illness they have.” She started. “But yes, I may have a fever too. Not sure where it came from considering I was fine two days ago. Tell Mrs. Hudson thanks. Shouldn't you go be with Miles?”

“I will. Shortly. I came for you if you hadn't noticed.”

Molly rolled her eyes at him. “Obviously. You've come, you can go back.”

Sherlock just settled more into the couch. “I think I'll wait until you eat that. You were asleep when I called so I can only assume you haven't eaten in quick awhile. You must be starving.”

The sound of Molly's stomach rumbling did not fall on deaf ears. She sighed. The bowl was still warm so she indulged.

She took a few spoonfuls of it before saying anything. “I suppose now is as good as time as any for you to tell me what happened with Miles mother. I may change my mind by tomorrow.”

Sherlock was quiet as he watched her eat. He let her taste a few more spoonfuls before he let out a great sigh. “Don't say anything until I'm finished. It'll be difficult enough telling you.”

Molly had a ‘Why?’ on her lips but she kept it to herself as she chanced a glance at him. He was looking away from her, in fact he moved onto his feet. He carefully took off his coat and scarf laying it over the back of the couch before he made it over to the only window in the room.

Molly watched him, the silhouette of the detective was very moody in the dim light. It fit the situation she supposed. She could imagine him doing that a lot in Baker Street.

“Her name was Willa. Not a very normal name but neither is mines. I met her and Miles while I was working a case in Lincolnshire. She was sweet in a very understated way. Her beauty mirrored that as well which I guess must have been what drawn me to her. That and Miles of course. He was a toddler at the time and so fascinated by dangerous things. Like me. He actually was the reason I met her at all. He just came up to me and made a grab for my coat sleeve, so I bent down to him and ruffled his hair with a grin on my face. Willa was rushing to me when I looked up. She apologized even though nothing bad had happened. I remember telling her to keep an eye on him because next time I wouldn't be around. The funny thing about that is that I was around, she sought me out near the end of my case and brought me a dish of food as a thank you. I nearly didn't accept it. They were worse off than I was and I was in this big house, they would need all the food that they had. I would have been fine. I must have decided at some point that they could stay the night because they ended up doing so. The truth was that it was a bit lonely in the house and I spent so much time out of it.

The next morning they were gone and I felt the loss, but I wasn't going to seek them out. I figured it was a one night thing. Nothing happened between us. She was just very kind and funny. I could tell how much she loved her son. He was quite the remarkable little one too. I know that now more than ever.

The next morning they were gone and I felt the loss, but I wasn't going to seek them out. I figured it was a one night thing. Nothing happened between us. She was just very kind and funny. I could tell how much she loved her son. He was quite the remarkable little one too. I know that now more than ever.

So, the next time I saw Miles he was alone. He had ash on his face and only one shoe on. I grew concerned so I picked him up and looked around. No sign of Willa. I asked around to see where the two of them lived. It had to be close.

The smoke was what caught my eye. I rushed forward knowing that this was it. I had to be sure. Miles tried to wrestle out of my arms but I held him close. He called out to her, wanting his mother
but their home was gone. So was she.

I didn't really know how to care for a child but I knew that I couldn't leave him there. There was no father to take care of him. No grandmother. He was all alone. I didn't want him to be alone. So I took him in.

I didn't know for a time how the fire had gotten started until about a year after I had had Miles in London with me. It wasn't Willa’s fault. She had been knitting in the kitchen. There was this man in the village that few people had seen but he had become a person of great interest to me throughout my investigation. He killed her.

There was this heavy pause. Molly had long since stop eating, she had been entranced by his story. It didn't feel finished yet. So she waited.

And waited.

Until Sherlock continued on. It was such a struggle for him to talk about it. Molly could feel it in her chest.

“It’s my fault that Miles doesn’t get to be with her. He doesn’t get to see her smiles of approval when he gets something right. Or the way people flocked to her happily. He's missing out on that because of my work.”

Molly knew that he didn’t want her to say anything but she couldn't let him say things like that. “Miles loves you, Sherlock. He wouldn't blame you for this. Even if he knew the truth.”

Sherlock turned sideways so that he could stare at this girl. The one who seemed to not get it completely. “No. He does know the truth. It's the one thing I couldn't shield him from.”

“He doesn't pass judgement on you. He's the one person who won't because you saved him from a life that he wouldn’t have enjoyed. He enjoys you, he loves being around you. You say he's attracted to danger but you're the safest person that he knows. So don't give me that. If anything he loves you in spite of that.”

Sherlock bowed his head and became very quiet for a little while. Molly struggled to get up and move to her kitchen. She put the Tupperware in the sink, running some water over it before ducking into the fridge for a bottle of water. When she rejoined Sherlock, he had moved back over to the sofa. Molly threw her legs onto the couch as she lay down in a half sitting up position.

She watched him. His body was more relaxed than she had seen it in a long time. She took a sip of her water. He opened his mouth to talk only to shut it.

Then he tried again a bit more successfully. “He's still out there. The man who killed and burned Miles’ mother. Willa’s killer is still there.”

“What's his name?”

“He went by M. I've never found out anymore than that.”

“Why not? It's something you can't put to bed.”

“Out of safety for Miles. If I get too close he'll come looking for the boy.”

Molly kicked him then. “You're an idiot.”
Sherlock huffed at her. “That was not necessary. I'm being vulnerable here.”

“You're still an idiot, Mister Detective. Get a clue. You have the chance to get a head start. As devoted as you are to your job I know you couldn't have just let it go. You know where he is. Or at least how to find him.”

Sherlock took in a deep breath. “I really despise how much you can tell from a look. He's in London...somewhere...lurking...waiting for his chance.” Molly smiled, “Then let's give him a reason to come out from the gallows. It's time you ended this for good.”

“You sound like you have a plan.” He shifted so that he was looking at her. She shook her head as she shut her eyes. “No, I just want you to stop moping now that we've got this out in the open. You can do something for Miles now. Something impressive. Hell you might even impress me too.”

Molly didn't know it but this was the challenge the detective was looking for. All he had to do was talk to her.

Funny how his mum had mentioned something similar. He needed to trust the women in his life more. He was going to gain some from the one who was falling asleep on him.

Mrs. Hudson what did you put into that soup?

Molly had never seen Sherlock in full detective mode. Most detectives that she had read about or seen on TV kept their work private from peering eyes. Not this one. It wasn’t the only thing different about him either. He also claimed to be a ‘consulting detective’ specifically. Molly had no idea what that meant entirely.

Perhaps something like an on call doctor but with mysteries to solve? She thought about phrasing it that way exactly but seeing how adamant he was about it, adding it onto their good flow of energy she didn’t want to mess it up.

She did find him highly comical as of late. It was a contrast to how she previously saw him.

Molly found it interesting how clean Sherlock’s wall of deductions was. It was strung up with thumbtacks that kept the strings in place as they wove from this image to another. Sherlock’s messy handwriting littered several color coded index cards.

“This is impressive, Sherlock.” She told him.

Her declaration only made the curly haired man jump. He had been so lost in thought. Molly smiled from the other side of the couch where she had stopped to put her bag down.

Sherlock turned around sideways. “Didn’t hear you come in.”

“I stopped in to see Mrs. Hudson. Miles in his room?” She asked, noticing the absentee boy.

“He’ll be down in about…” He paused, “Five minutes probably. You’re early.”

Molly shrugged. “I’m punctual.”

Once she had taken off her coat she moved around where Sherlock was standing to get a closer look. She gave it a once over, hmming when she saw something interesting.

The wall had information about an elusive network that the shadowy ‘M’ orchestrated. There didn’t
seem to be photos of the man in question, but a few others who where connected to him were there. Someone called IA, and another simply called Moran.

IA was a gorgeous woman. The photo looked to be from up close.

Molly looked at Sherlock. He had to be next to her to capture such a shot.

She wouldn’t pry. It wasn’t any of her business.

“It's a start.” She said after a moment. She could feel the detective’s gaze trained on her. Now he was the one staring. She didn't say anything until she heard the sound of the feet coming in a hurry. Miles must have heard her talking. She turned around when she felt him stop beside her. “Feeling better?”

He nodded enthusiastically, “Well we better get started then. We have loads to catch up on.” Miles and Molly left the detective to his own devices and headed back to Miles room after Molly grabbed her bag again.

They were getting closer to the end of summer and with that the last days of what would be her final days with this child. Molly knew she was going to miss it. Miss being around this ray of sunshine.

“You're sad again, Miss Hooper.” He mumbled after having finished a section of math problems the tutor had picked out for him to do. Fractions were difficult to most people, and so it seems was a struggle to Miles as well.

She shook her head again. “No, I'm just happy. It's easy to confuse the too.” She took the workbook from him and began to look over his work. He had only messed up on three of the ten questions which was a great improvement from where he had been in the beginning of this section. “You've gotten better. The fifths confuse you still. Here...let's rework it together.”

Sherlock could hear the quiet mumblings of the two but he pushed it aside as he focused. He had learned that M had followed him here. He was somewhere in London hiding like all spiders did.

He thought of what Molly had told him. He had to get him to come out so he could end it once and for all. It would help if he had a photograph of the man in question. So far none of his contacts hadn't found any sightings of him but it was abundantly obvious he was getting closer. He had even gone so far as to text his brother for assistance. He hadn't been helpful. No surprise there. When he needed him he had been busy. Sherlock supposed that was what they did to each other. Pushed each away while somehow still keeping each other close. It was the Holmes way.

He would just have to reach him again. This was important and he was sure Mycroft knew something. He had been very cryptic when his baby brother brought a toddler back from the village. His brother's behavior was something of a clue itself but he couldn't work out yet. So he added it to the list.

“You're looking pensive, dear.” Mrs. Hudson greeted him as she came in holding a tray of food. He noticed there were three cups of tea. She clearly assumed that Molly would be staying longer.

Sherlock looked down at his watch and he got to his feet. She had been nearly two hours extra. Or had she left already? No. He could still hear their voices chattering away about chemicals.

Curious.

“Are you alright, Sherlock?” The older woman asked when she watched him sit back down with his hands folded under his neck propping it up as he leaned over.
“Yes, fine, plenty going on to keep me on my toes.” He waved her off.

He noticed her looking at his wall. Her expression carried the worry it always had. He didn't like that. He hummed.

“You're looking into this after all this time.” She turned back to him and he noticed a sheen on her eyes.

“It's time to bury it. It's taken me ages. Thought it was about time.” Miles and Molly's voices grew closer.

“He smelled tea.” Molly giggled, her bag was on her shoulder.

“Sit, dear. I made enough for everyone.” Mrs. Hudson encouraged the young woman who was teetering on her toes. She smiled before sitting down next to Miles on the couch.

“Yeah, okay. Haven't eaten since I came. I suppose I can stay for a little bit longer.”

Sherlock was cry for aware of Mrs. Hudson staring at him. He focused on drinking his tea instead of giving any recognition of her observing his reaction. He stayed still.

She soon left the three of them.

A comfortable silence filled the room for a little while as they ate the sandwiches and tea. “Cyanide poisoning.” Molly whispered.

Sherlock swiveled his head at her. “What? What did you just say?”

“Cyanide poisoning. It's the common thread. I've had to do tests on these victims.” She paused looking down at Miles. “Should we be talking…”

“Of course...how did I miss that? I was so focused on the others that I forgot about the MO. Moran is a brute who dalliances in bomb making occasionally and IA likes her information, poison is his brand.” He rose to his feet and circle back over to the wall. His finger trailing over the victims. He pulled out the pen and started scribbling again.

Before he got to invested in this new lead he doubled back over to Molly who was once again standing. She opened her mouth to say something when he grabbed her hand and pulled her into his body and dipped down to catch her mouth in a tender kiss.

Molly would have certainly been knocked out by the force of it all it if he wasn't holding her. His arm pressing her into his chest. This was unexpected and yet she didn't push him away. He didn't really give her a chance to either. He had slipped away just as quick as he rushed her muttering.

“You're brilliant Molly Hooper.”

Molly didn't feel much brilliance coming from her. She felt dizzy and oddly warm.

She heard the snap of a camera which took her out of her trance like state that Sherlock's mouth had put her end. Miles had taken another picture of her. Why was he always doing that when she was frazzled?

“Silly boy, I'll see you soon.” She changed a glance at Mr. Holmes who had snogged her and complimented her in the same space of time. He had turned away.

She couldn't think properly here. “You too as well.” She said quietly unsure if he would even hear
her. He had been moving around frantically ever since he had returned to his wall but she noticed
him stop when she addressed him.

“Of course. Get home safely, Molly.”

There was another thing to think about. He didn't use her first name often but when he did it made
her breath catch for the briefest of moments.

Molly made her leave then. She didn't need any more things to think about on top of what was
already becoming a short albeit complicated list.

Miles walked over to Sherlock shortly after Molly had left. “You called her Molly.”

Sherlock could hear the grin on his face even though he wasn't looking at him. “Yes…”, he trailed
off distractedly. He found it baffling that he didn't mention the kiss. He had been staring. He decided
that maybe he wanted to give him some space on the subject. Opting for the lesser of the two
occurrences. It was better he supposed. He didn't know how to talk to him about what could happen
next, Sherlock didn't know if it would readily change anything.

He slipped back to his current puzzle on the wall. He was going to need to pull a few more resources
from the outside.

He might need to make a small trip to the hospital. It had been some time since he had stepped in it.
The last was a more dire circumstances when Miles was four years old.

He wouldn't be going to A&E though. A different department.

He waited two days to go to Bart's. It was enough time for him to figure out all the things that he
might need and how to go about doing it. Things might have been evolving between Molly and
Sherlock but that didn't mean that everything has changed. She did have a job outside, and it was
better that she kept it should something else happen; something ominous and terrifying that he felt
was close to his chest.

He dressed as he usually would and made sure that Miles was fine before he left to do his work. He
had gotten much better at not just leaving despite his idea that Miles was fine on his own. Molly's
words were ever present at the forefront of his mind. He wanted to do what was best for him and
lead in an example that he wouldn't be disappointed by. Or that she wouldn't.

Sherlock took his time getting there, walking was a pastime that he relished most these days. He
enjoyed the feel of the carbon dioxide entering his body, along with the cool air that so many ran
from. He allowed it to push his hair out of his face and touch upon the cheeks that so many
commented on. It brought a freedom to him that he rarely felt.

About two minutes left into his walk his phone started going off. He grumbled as he fished it out of
his pocket. So much for the peace.

A blocked call. He stopped walking, gnawing at his lip as he tried to figure out who could be calling
him in this fashion. He had a hunch, but he wasn't entirely certain.

The caller hung up after a few long stretches of the detective just staring at his mobile. The ringing
continued a few beats later. Sherlock swiped his thumb over the screen and put the phone to his ear.
He listened to the other end trying to discern anything suspicious about the call as he lifted his head
to look at the building that wasn't too far from where he was already standing still.

He turned his back on it, as a insistent clicking began to surface from the other end. “You've been
looking for me.” A voice started in a slow lazy voice that seemed distorted by the clicking noise. There wasn’t anything particularly special behind the voice but the words meant something even if Sherlock wasn’t sure if he could trust it.

“Have I? I can’t identify who you are behind a block call.”

An amusing laugh followed a few short moments later.

“You’re as clever as ever, Mister Holmes. How’s the kid?”

Sherlock was silent, his hand was crushing his phone. The only thing keeping him from breaking it was the fact that it was his only way of talking to the person who had ruined Miles’ life and took his mother away from him.

“Quiet. That’s fine. I already know what I need to know. I’ll leave it at that for now. See you soon, Mister Holmes.” The line clicked off and then the detective actually threw his mobile against the nearest wall shattering it in the process. He was fuming with rage and confusion, but most of all he was afraid of what he was dealing with now.

He pressed his head against the wall as he drew in heavy breaths that were supposed to help him calm down but instead he was only growing more heated. He bent down to pick up his shattered phone before resuming his walk. His face had changed into a mask of nothing. He had a mission to complete, it started here.

As he walked hurriedly through the halls of St. Bart’s seeking out the lab and the technician who would have most of the answers he desired his mind threw pictures of things moments that hadn’t happens yet. Horrible things that he didn’t want to happen.

Images of shadowy figures and blood, a spit of auburn hair and a boy being trapped in a burning building. He shook his head, he didn’t want it.

When he had gotten up the stairs that led to the lab he took in a deep breath, his eyes flitting around for the sign that he hadn’t already passed up the door. It didn’t take him too long to figure out which door or was. A familiar figure caught him in his tracks before he realized that the hall was surrounded by men and women in suits with earpieces hanging in their inner ear no doubt giving access to a conversation that he desperately wished he had been honing onto a few moments prior.

One foot was already in front of the other when the man in the pinstriped suit swiveled his head around to look at him. He had been saying something before he ducked out of the lab but it fell on Sherlock’s deaf ears as he tried to make sense of it.

“There you are brother dear. I just had the most funny conversation with a lab technician.”

Sherlock wore a frown as he looked at his brother. “What did you say to her?”

“Nothing of consequence, I swear Sherlock. Just making sure everything is the way it should be.” The detective didn’t like the way that sounded.

He chose to decide if that was the truth. He brushed shoulders with Mycroft as he slipped through the lab doors. He couldn’t believe after all the lack of communication on his end that his brother would be so Mycroft that he would do something that could damage what he desired going forward. On second thought that wasn’t so difficult to imagine. Mycroft had a one track mind when it came to him.

Sod him.
When Sherlock came to a halt after rushing through the lab’s doorway he notice immediately how cool the room was. Not in the way of temperature, but in the solemn feeling atmosphere. Molly was standing at a table in the center of the room with a piece of paper in her hands.

She looked contemplative as her eyes stayed trained on the page. Sherlock moved carefully close to her. He only stopped once he reached the table. He stayed on the opposite side, not wanting to startle her.

“Molly.” He called.

Her eyes slowly lifted from the page to look at him. She jumped back a little. “What are you doing here?”

“Well…” he started as he began to loo over her to try to discern what had happened between her and his older brother. He had forgotten how easy it was for her to close herself off from people. From him. “I originally came to see if you had any more info on the victims of the M cases that I didn't already have however, I see your message spoken my brother.” Sherlock paused as he gauged her reaction.

She seemed to be reading him. For what? His concern was for her, no one else at present.

“Yeah, he's…” She grasped for the right word. “Protective?”

She wasn't off put by his brother. That was new. Most people who had come to know his brother were no longer in his life for several different reasons. “He claims to be. What did he want?”

“You don't talk to him do you? I'm sure you just saw him.” She didn't hide how she truly felt did she? He didn't find it as annoying as he once did. It was a part of her encompassing charm.

He smiled briefly. “It's how we work on most days. Answer the question.”

Molly put the page down, making sure to turn it face down so that Sherlock couldn't see whatever it was. Confidential?

“Allright.” She sighed. “He informed me that I can't allow you to pursue the infamous M. Or rather I should have left alone. He's fairly cryptic but I'm a good at reading people as you probably have figured out by now. He knows something.”

Sherlock nodded as he let all that sink in.

“What would you do if you were in my shoes?”

“I don't know your relationship with your brother but I stand by what I said before. You need to end this, for your sake and Miles.”

“And you…” Sherlock mumbled, as he looked down at the table. He hasn't quite figured out how to express how he feels about her. This was a stepping stone in the right direction.

Molly blinked. “Me?”

“Yeah. You're in my life and I would like if you continued to be...if that's what you want.” He added quickly.

Molly's cheeks had a little color as she smiled softly at him. She didn't know how to answer him. She felt like she had something in her throat but she felt elated about this...confession of his.
It had only been a few days since he had kissed her in the sitting room of Baker Street. She had played the moment over and over trying to decide if she could find a reason for why it happened. Or if it was a bad thing? She had been worried of it's significance when her part of tutoring Miles was nearly over. She wouldn't have a reason to come by. She could make lame excuses but it would have been ten times more awkward.

Sherlock had freed her from that.

It came to her then - what she wanted to say to him. “Thank you.” She reached over and grabbed his hand. Sherlock squeezed her hand.

They stood there in silence for a little bit before Sherlock broke it. “About this case…?” Molly shook her head at him before moving some of her files around and picking up one of the bigger ones and putting it in front of him. “You'll have to stay here and look over them. I like this job.” She told him. “I was looking over it earlier on my break to refresh myself since it's been at least two weeks since the last one.”

“Anything specific you found that you remember not being on my wall?”

“You didn't have the first two victims. Also pay attention to the dosages. There's something strange about them.”

Sherlock had begun to sift through the files, taking note to what Molly advised him to. He knew she wouldn't tell him about it if she didn't find it odd herself. Her job was to analyse data. he was sure she had found plenty discrepancies before.

They worked on their separate projects for a little while in silence until Molly had finished. She moved around the table and touched his arm to let him know that it was time to go. He passed her the files back, which she just took into a separate room that had her name on it. She didn't file them away?

She smiled. “I didn't think you were done.”

“Almost done. If I could…” He stopped talking seeing her shake her head at him. That was a very firm no. He would just have to take what he got for the moment.

Sherlock looked at his watch. It was after 3. They had been working for roughly four hours. He waited out in the hall for Molly as she got her things out of her locker.

“Where are you headed?” Sherlock asked her as they begun to decent to the lower floors.

Molly was quiet for a few seconds, obviously thinking over what she wanted to share with him. Sherlock supposed that was fair, he had done the same with her.

“I have a personal matter to take care of. Why?” She looked up at the detective.

“Thought you might be hungry…” He trailed off.

The cool air hit them as they stepped outside. Molly embraced her coat and scarf against the chill. “Mmm, I'll meet you in about two hours for a bite. Where do you want to go?”

Sherlock blinked, he hadn't been sure she would have gone for that. He just wanted to spend more time with her outside of the flat, and without a prying young child's eyes. Not that he minded spending time with both of them at the same time. He just liked one on one time more. He wanted to learn as much as he could while he had the time to do so.
“There's the tiny Italian place that I like to go. Here.” He pulled out a piece of scrap paper from his small notepad that he had hidden in his pocket, and a pen and scribbled down something. “I know the person who owns it.”

Molly gave him a curious look but didn't say anything as she took the page from him and pocketed it. “Alright, I'll see you then. Tell Miles I said hello when you go check on him.”

“How…” Molly just giggled as she skipped away from him. She actually slipped. Sherlock shook his head at her. She was something he'd give her that.

When Molly had gotten two streets away from where she had left her something or other person who doubled as her employer, she took out a different type of parchment from her pocket. She immediately frowned while looking at it. It had been ushered upon her from the elder brother; Mycroft Holmes.

She had been mostly honest to Sherlock. She did think no matter what his brother thought that he should go what he wanted. What he wanted was something that should benefit not only the detective but others who surrounded him. She thought there was nothing wrong with that. In a similar fashion there was nothing wrong with her for finding out what she could to help him without clueing him in on what she was doing. She planned to do so eventually but she wished to figure out what she could on her own. She had done well to help him in her way already. What would it hurt?

The card was probably one of the most professional pieces of paper due had even possessed in her life. Much of her life consisted of second hand things, and cheap things. Somehow the man who carried himself in a way that teacher well beyond Sherlock's own outlook on his character when it came to others.

His older brother was something different and Molly hadn't decided if it was a good thing or not.

His card held the basics: his name, a vague representation of what he does and an email address. Apparently giving put his phone number was something he didn't do unlike Sherlock. Molly had seen Sherlock's business cards and he gave away most avenues of contacting him.

She turned over the card remembering the way the man had picked up her pen and wrote on it. An address to a place called the Diogenes Club. There was an address that was in the heart of the city but further enough away that she would grow tired especially after her shift walking to. This only left her with one option. Hail down a cab.

It took her three tries to do so. Upon telling the cabbie driver where she wanted to go he laughed and asked, “What are you gonna do there? Only snooty business types frequent that place. No offence lady you don't look like the type.”

Molly just grimaced without saying anything. It wasn't his business. It did make her feel concerned considering her state of dress. She wasn't properly dressed to do business. She had just gotten off of work and probably smelled like sweat and fumes. She let out a sigh as she took out the spare fragrance spray she had with her and sprayed a little on her.

“Nice.” She heard the man call from the drivers seat. It made her smile slightly. At least someone beside herself liked the scent. It was a combination of cucumbers and melon sweetness. She had about two other kinds at her place. There had been a nice deal on them so she had picked them up.

It didn't take awfully long for them to get to the club or what was supposed to be a club. It was more of a very distinguished looking building.
Molly paid for cabbie with a small thanks before she stepped out. She took in a deep breath as she stared at it. It was certainly more intimidating up close.

Even so she knew she would need to enter the building and find where Mycroft was. He hadn't give her any specific directions about doing that. Only that she would find him here.

There were people milling around outside but none looked to be going inside, or seeming to belong there. Those of the less fortunate standing.

If she wasn't already nervous she would have passed a few pounds to help them out. Perhaps when she got through with this.

She sidestepped a woman who was sprawled along the first step on her way inside. What she found inside gave her pause that was riddled with confusion. Several older men were gathered in chairs with small tables made of the best wood she was sure reading papers and ultimately being completely silent.

Molly wasn't sure what she should do here. It would be simpler if there was a receptionist at the least. However there wasn't one. She would surely have to talk to one of them to find out what she needed. The problem with that was that she didn't want to disturb anyone. The men were important and she was aware of how less she seemed in comparison.

It was the same feeling she got being in the room with people that Sherlock knew in Lincolnshire. She felt stuck and very distressed.

As she had decided to which man she could bother a woman dressed in all black came out of a side door that she hadn't even seen. “Miss Hooper.” She called distractedly seeing as she was engrossed on her mobile.

“Yes?” Molly asked, which made the woman who was remarkably beautiful look up with a gentle smile.

“You've come to see Mister Holmes. Ah. Mycroft Holmes that is.” The woman seemed to be catching herself, realizing that Molly was acquainted with another Holmes man already.

“I suppose so.” Molly nodded.

She blinked at Molly for a second before swiftly turning around. “Follow me.”

The med student hadn't noticed but the older gentlemen had stopped what they were doing to watch the display between the two women. An anomaly of sorts when it came to this place. They had just recently gotten used to the woman in black’s presence. In truth they had only begin to accept her because of Mycroft Holmes. He would get them thrown out for causing the wrong kind of scene. It was all very well.

Molly didn't know what to think of the woman but she was grateful that she suddenly came along to her aid.

They were soon slipping through a dark corridor that was poorly lit by tiny lamp lights along the wall. She supposed to idea was that no one would know which way to go. It was nearly impossible to tell either way.

The woman's hand soon took hold of Molly's and she was pulled into another room. This one was bigger and well lit. The man who had visited her in the lab was sitting behind a desk with files littering it. He was in work mode up until they entered. His head shot up and he had that same false
smile that he used when he was talking to her. Although this one seemed slightly more friendly and was directed at the woman. “Ah. Anthea, thank you for fetching our new companion. You can send for the other one in about fifteen minutes, I'd say.”

Molly gave him an inquisitive look but he waved it off. She didn't need to know. “Take a seat.” It was Molly's turn to dismiss it. “I'm fine standing.”

“Hm, no. You've been on your feet for nearly eight hours. I see my brother's stubbornness has rubbed off on someone else. It always happens that way but from what I know of you already you've always been this way.”

“I didn't come here to discuss myself, Mycroft.”

He looked to be mulling over that notion. “Perhaps but it does concern me for one reason or another. Regardless I suppose I'll start with what you want to know first, as a courtesy.”

Molly didn't think this was something the man did often. He was probably used to doing whatever he wanted and yet he was changing the script to suit her. Was this real or was he leading up to something else? The latter she assumed.

“I'll play along.” She sighed before despite her earlier statement she walked to the front of his desk and sat down. She didn't know if this place had cameras as well as the lobby did. She'd rather speak close to him in case he did give something away. Lest of all her knees were screaming at her. “What is it about Sherlock wanting to bring a man to justice that you find so wrong?”

“It's not that simple. I've always kept a close eye on his activity since he decided to he wanted to be a detective. He has done a decent job of keeping his head down and picking cases that have a lesser probability of getting him killed. Has he come close a few times? Of course, but it doesn't mean I had a problem with this. This man he's looking for will most certainly be the end of my brother.”

“And so you won't help him?” Molly asked, she was completely baffled by this. How can an older brother be this way about his youngest sibling? If Molly had a kid brother or sister she would want to do anything she could for them. It just didn't make sense.

“On the contrare, Miss Hooper. I'm doing this because I want to help him.”

Molly pinched her nose. “I don't understand.”

“Of course you don't. You've only recently opened yourself up to my brother and any...feelings he may have about you. You don't really know him.” Molly drew in deep breaths as she attempted to not look completely taken back by what the man thought of her. He thought her silly. She was anything but that.

“You misunderstood, Mr. Holmes. I don't care what you think of me. I'm not a child. My thoughts and feelings are valid but nevertheless what I want to know is if you know something that you don't want your brother to know about M? From where I'm standing you seem very intelligent and you are at a higher point of power than others.”

“Perhaps.” He paused a moment as if thinking over what he wanted to say. In truth, he already knew this was coming. She had tried this same line of thought before at the hospital. However now he would answer her. They were in a secure setting. “M is a person of interest to me. I've been following him for a long time out of suspicion after Sherlock returned with Miles in tow. Sherlock was quite vulnerable at the time and so he told me things that in turn aided me and my search.”
“You found him.” Molly cut in, she was sure of it. She had her own suspicions about that too.

Mycroft sighed, he hated being cut off but he knew that this was vital to get things moving along so he would try to adjust. His brother couldn’t day he never did anything for him. “Indeed. If it’s all the same to you it would be better if my brother didn’t ever cross paths with him.”

“Because he’s killed people?” Molly didn’t give the man much room to answer key alone nod, “It’s Sherlock’s job to find bad people. So what if that person might be connected to something that he struggles with. We all are struggling..this would most certainly help him move on and be happy in some way.”

There were a long silence after Molly finished her latest declaration for Sherlock’s case. Mycroft had slipped into a mode that nearly mirrors his younger brother. He even had the steeple hand gesture down perfectly. Maybe it was something he learned from Mycroft.

“You truly believe that?” Molly could only nod. The tired expression on the older man's face made her want to stop pushing against him so hard. At least for the moment.

It left him just as quickly. The false smile was picked up again and he gestured her forward as he pulled something up on the monitor of his computer.

Molly carefully rose from her seat and stepped the two feet it took for her to be at it's edge. She folded her hands in front of her as several images begun to layer one on top of the other in a sequence of horrific imagery. There was death, and blood and mayhem that at the center stood a single man in a white shirt and jeans. His hair slicked back as he smiled humorously in the center of a room staring blatantly at the camera.

It wasn't just any room. Molly recognized it. An asylum from about an hour south of London where she had been a few years ago in a volunteer program. Broadmoor Psychiatric Hospital. A very high security facility that housed over two hundred men with varying mental issues.

“From your reaction I'd say you know where this is.” He was asking her, he had already known. “By with holding this out of Sherlock's hands I was also attempting to protect you as well. I haven’t the faintest idea why I would but you are important to someone I hold dear. As such I have a proposition for you dear.”

Molly struggled to lift her head away from the screen and shift her attention over to the powerful man. She felt weak. She didn’t know why it made her feel like that when she hadn't been there when this man had killed nearly fifty men in cold blood, but it twisted her gut in knots.

She didn’t want to admit to feeling this way either. Not when she had been so strong before. Even still Mycroft had said he had an offer for her...what did that even mean?

“What?” Her voice was raspy and soft in ways that only came from being caught unaware and full of emotions.

Mycroft turned to his side where Anthea - the woman who Molly had met earlier - was seated on her mobile. “Tell him to come in.”

Anthea answers with a quiet, “Yes, sir,” before ducking out the door.

Mycroft looked back up at the girl who had lost her luster and confidence. He had thought seeing the evidence would falter her resolve. He had only one more thing to do to complete it. No more lives had to be lost in Sherlock's inner circle.
“You can stay out of it. Mind I won't stop you if you choose otherwise however I've come into contact with someone who cares for you a great deal.”

“Who do you mean? I don't have many friends.”

Mycroft let out a little noise of agreement. She kept to herself and that had done her extraordinary well so far. He could see a glimmer of what his brother saw. Then again Sherlock always had more reasons than one to become attached to someone that others shy-ed away from.

A knock came at the door and Molly could only turn as Mycroft called for the person to come in without giving anything away.

The door swung open to reveal a tall man. Molly didn't understand at first. He did look oddly familiar but she didn't know why got a solid two minutes.

He was slimmer than he used to be when they were kids. His face looked relatively the same, the smile did help clue her in on that too. She couldn't ever forget that amused grin that often have her a little hope when she was worried about every little thing. Thomas O’Leary was one of favorite people.

“Thomas?” She called as she got out of her seat. She didn't move towards him. Her legs still felt like they would give up on her at any moment. So she just stared from a distance.

“Oh, don't give me that look Molls. It's me, big old Tom. I grew into myself a bit though.” He chuckled as he twiddled his thumbs - an old habit of his when he was nervous or trying to keep his bright energy under control. His hair was wild but well kept nowadays.

“You look good.” She nodded.

“And you haven't changed at all. I heard you were getting into some stuff, thought I'd finally come see you.”

Molly gave him a confused look. “You've known where I was?”

Tom shot a withering glance behind her at Mycroft. “Ugh, he loves his secrets don't he?” Tom sighed as he begun to walk about the room stretching his legs some. “I don't live that far from you. I happened to see you one day when I was out at the shops getting some things. I thought I had seen a ghost, then this man comes all intimidating and the like and gives me an option to actually see you again, and here I am.”

Tom moves closer to Molly after saying that. He inspects her for a moment with a smile. “Well there is something else but I thought I'd wait until you decide what you want to do…” He trailed off.

Molly just looked at him. She hadn't realized just how much she could miss someone from that time in her life. But Thomas had been a wonderful part of that. In his own way he had saved her over and over again. Especially after Caera left them. He had been her friend and she had never truly thanked him for that.

As she got ready to do so - her fingers itching to reach out and hug him - a specific voice interrupted the flow of bubbly feelings. “Step away from Miss Hooper.”

Sherlock.

Molly whipped her head around at the sound of his voice. It wasn't just what he said, it was the tone. It felt like ice. It felt like ages since Molly had heard the chilliness of it. She wanted it to disappear.
Sherlock's whole body appeared tense and he looked particularly loathsome towards Tom. Molly chose to step around her friend and stare at him head on.

“Sherlock. This is Tom, we used to live in a home together.” Sherlock either chose not to hear her or he simply disregarded as he took the steps to stand directly in front of her.

“She's not going with you.” He told Tom from over her shoulder. To Tom's credit he didn't say anything to him. He did seem to expect his to happen.

“That's up to Molly, brother dear.” Mycroft intercepted.

“Shut it, Mycroft. This is all your fault I'm sure.”

“Don't be childish…”

“He's right.” Molly stepped closer to Sherlock. “It's not your call. It never has been. I chose to come into your life, and I can decide to spend a few days with an old friend because I care about him too.” Molly inclined her head slightly in Tom's direction so that he could see that she meant that.

It may have not been in the way Sherlock was thinking but it did care a similar sentiment. She owed this man a lot. Added to that her curiosity to what he wanted to wait to confide to her, she needed to do this for herself.

This decision didn't mean she didn't want to help Sherlock or Miles for that matter any longer. It just meant she needed a small siesta from it to give herself happiness elsewhere. She had no doubt she would be back and firmly in their living space quite soon. Maybe it wouldn't be soon enough for the man she was very much learning to admire and care about immensely but she wasn't giving up on him. Or them.

Sherlock began to try to talk some sense into Molly. He couldn't understand how quickly something this wonderful could change into something that he didn't want. He needed her to see it from his view but it was hard to forget that she was a very independent woman and she could go as she pleases. He couldn't freely admit that he didn't want her to go. Not in front of present company. it would surely find a way back to his parents. His dad had no idea. He had made Mummy promise to keep it between the two of them for now.

Molly reached out and placed her hands at his forearms. “I'll return to you. I promise you and Miles both that.”

Molly's eyes had always caused such a deep frustration for the detective. Now, it doubled his annoyance and made him sigh heavily. She was telling him to trust her. “Talk with your brother. He should be able to help you with your case whether he wants to or not now.”

Even though she hadn't shot a glance at his brother he could tell that Mycroft didn't like it. He didn't like anything he hadn't already agreed to. If he knew his brother as well as he claimed to know Sherlock, Sherlock was sure that this small hiccup in his life with Molly was planned. However, he had to smile at Molly's vengeful streak. She had her own plan to help him and this was her chokehold.

Sherlock looked at Tom. “Don't do anything foolish. I want her back safe.”

Tom saluted him. “You have my word, Mister Detective.”

Molly grinned at the two of them as Sherlock turned her attention back to him as he dipped down to kiss her. This one was a different sort. He was pouring so much of himself into her mouth.
It felt strange but she relished it knowing they would be apart for quite some time.

In the end Tom and Molly left the two brothers to their own devices. Molly hoping that everything would be alright. Her thoughts were not too far from the absent little boy and what danger she could be leaving to face alone.

She promised to find out within a day at the most.

Sherlock slumped in the chair that Molly had taken, and stared at his brother with a very annoyed look on his face. “I’m not leaving until you tell me what you have. I may be royally pissed off at you right now for somehow getting to Molly at the lab, her lying to me about it and then finding another man in her presence who could take her away from me BUT I’m willing to be civil for however long this takes.”

Mycroft looked at his brother with surprise. “I almost expected you to jump across the table. You’ve gotten better at managing your rage.”

“I know how to pick my battles. It does help that she didn’t give you much of a choice in the matter.”

Mycroft hummed at the notion. “I could still throw you out. I’m trying to do right by you, little brother.”

“How is that right? I’m fully capable of taking care of myself and the people I care about. I don’t just send them away because I think it’ll be better.”

“Perhaps you should just this once. Think of the child. I’m positive you have yet to clue him in on what you’re trying to do. In fact, Mummy wants to see him. It’s been about two years since the last time you visited. He’d be well taken care of until this all blows over.”

Sherlock for once knew that his brother had his head on straight and wasn’t trying to cause him emotional harm. He actually wanted to keep them out of harm’s way. He didn’t care for Molly, he had known that from the start. He found Miles interesting though he had never really understood what made him bring him back to London with him. Together these two people made him better and if that wasn’t something worth protecting he didn’t know what was.

“He called me.” Sherlock sighed.

Mycroft sat up straighter if that was possible. “Pardon?”

“M. Before I realized that Molly didn’t have any personal matters to take care of and you had obviously said something to her to grab her attention...he called me directly from a blocked number. He knows that I’m looking for him. He knows about Miles.”

“Give me your mobile.” Mycroft pushed back from his chair, and walked around his desk while giving his assistant a look. She looked as equally alarmed as Mycroft had gotten. He was telling her to do something specifically without really saying it.

Sherlock took the shattered device out of his coat pocket and placed it in Mycroft’s outstretched hand. He watched him press the power button but nothing happened. “I’ll give you a new one for the time being. I suppose he’s not giving me much of a choice either. Anthea is sending Miles to the family cottage. Mrs. Hudson will be taken care of as well. Now...” He paused, giving Sherlock a very tense look.

“I’m going to show you what I showed her. Then we will figure out a way to fix this once and for all.” He once again turned the monitor to his brother, grabbing the keyboard to restart the process. He
hadn’t showed Miss Hooper everything. His brother would need everything he had.

He once again made a gesture at Anthea, who only nodded before walking out the room to retrieve something. Sherlock focused on the multitude of images. He realized immediately what made his brother distressed.

“How safe will she be with him...like he promised?”

“Perfectly. I have people around them.”

The sound of the door opening once again, had Sherlock twisted in his seat slightly to see Anthea coming back in with a stack of folders.

“Shall we begin, brother mine?”

Sherlock nodded.

Tom and Molly grabbed a late dinner upon getting out of the London area. He had been living close by but he had expressed Mycroft’s instructions to get her out. “I have clothes for you and everything. That Anthea girl had went on a trip to your place. Grabbed some things, and purchased a few other things that she said you were lacking.” He chuckled.

Molly found the idea of someone in her house completely invasive but it seemed that the woman was only trying to help. “Where will we be staying then?” She asked in between a sip of lemonade. They had taken to a sub shop with lovely desserts. It was different than the one that was nestled next to 221b - she had frequented Speedy’s often with Miles at times when there was not much to eat in Sherlock’s fridge - but she liked how full of life it was. People came and gone even at the late hours that they were frequenting. She later learned before leaving that it was a family owned business.

“There’s this house not too far from here that I have.”

“You have two homes?”

Tom smiled at Molly. “This property belonged to my (foster) ma. She passed a few years ago and left it to me.”

Molly patted his hand. That was sad news. She remembered how excited Tom had been when he had been adopted. The woman had been really sweet and had even let Molly come over a few times before they ended up moving. That had been the last time she had seen either of them. “Why don’t you just live there primarily?”

He had a funny expression on his face. He was holding something back. It was probably the thing that he had wanted to wait to tell her.

“I’ll explain everything soon. It’s a long story. I’d rather not have so many ears around.” Molly looked around them. There was quite a large crowd. Whatever it was that he wanted to discuss with her, it had to be serious.

“I’ll catch you up with my life in the mean time then.” She giggled.

“Yes, please.”

Molly told him about moving to London permanently and being accepted into the medical program
for pathology, a field that women rarely were accepted in because it’s a man’s job. Tom laughed because she seemed really excited about cutting into dead bodies. She briefly glossed over the few bad experiences she had when male coworkers in the lab, and finally told him how she met Sherlock.

“So he was very intense from the start? It wasn’t just me?”

Molly shook her head. “Not at all. I think he just reacts that way to anyone who is invading his territory. I was cleaning up his mess and he wasn’t happy about that. You just happened to be standing fairly close to me and not looking peeved by him in the slightest. I don’t think he’s used to that. There’s stories about him that say that he’s menacing. He is a bit…” She admitted.

“But not fatally so?” He guessed.

Molly liked that Tom understood where others just talked maliciously about it. He had always seemed to understand the way she thought and find solid reason in it.

“Of course not. I think if that was the case I would have had a hard time finding joy in my job with that in mind. Miles does help with that.”

“The kid?”

Molly nodded, smiling at the thought of the curly haired boy. “He knows how to get people to feel at ease.”

Tom hummed. They talked about a few other things as they finished their meal before heading out for Tom’s house. The house in question was very quaint- a one floor house of medium build constructed out of brick, the inside divided into two sections (the first were the kitchen and sitting room and the other held all the other rooms). In that retrospect she could see why he wanted to move to a possibly larger place in the city. It was very nice though.

She didn’t like thinking about it but if she had been given the chance she wouldn’t have minded growing up in a place like this. She was glad that her friend had though. After Molly went to see her things in the small guest room that used to be Tom’s - none of his things were no longer in there but there were a few scratches on the walls from thumbtacks and the like. It made her wonder what he had hanging up previously. There was a bathroom across the way for easy of access.

They settled down in the sitting room where he lit the small fireplace to get the place warmed up again. “I haven’t been back in about two months. I might stick around though.”

“Any reason why you left?”

“The facilities I needed were in London.”

Molly’s eyebrow rose at that.

Tom who was certainly about to release some form of huge news was still smiling as he twiddled with his hands and looked into the flames of the fire. “I suppose is not much of a story really. I’m going to die, Molls.”

Molly frowned, attempting to say something only to close her mouth. What was she supposed to say to that? I’m sorry… A part of her wished that there was some way to turn back time so that she would be able to be here with him when this was off the table. It brought some bittersweet feelings within her.
Instead of saying how sad she felt about this. She showcased the other feeling that was often paired with grief. “Why?”

It had happened when Caera died. Now she was losing the only other person who would ever mean something to her past self and her present self. She didn’t to relive this again. “After all this time...I just..” Molly broke off not truly realized that her chest hurt so much that she had started to cry.

Tom turned back around. “I asked myself the same question when I first collapsed in the grocers. I woke up in the A&E and when the doctor came in I just knew that something was wrong. I immediately thought of Caera who found out too late. We didn’t have the opportunity to save her like I had then. The funny thing about that though is that somehow it didn’t help. It’s my fate.” He stopped when he saw the way Molly’s body was shaking.

He got up and moved over to her side and placed his hand on her head. “I am happy…” He breathed, watching as she lifted her head and looked up at him. She had the same face that she carried when the girls and the ladies at the home were being mean to her and throwing things at her. She looked as if she would crumble. “…to have seen your face again. It makes this easier.”

“How?” Molly realized that she was only saying one word but it was the only way to quantify her thoughts about this at the current moment.

Tom sat on the table in front of her and took her hand. “Before she died Caera told me something. ‘It’s very strange how easy she makes things for people. Even when I’m dying I feel good because she’s there holding my hand and looking at me with complete adoration even when she’s hurting. She’s a beauty that I want you to protect, I want you to know this feeling someday. I may be leaving this world but you’re still here, Tommy. It’s your turn now.’ Then you came back in the room and I let you be with her in her last moments and I saw what she meant. Maybe we’re selfish but I want you here with me in these last days.”

Molly wanted to ask him how he could know that it was coming. There was something that she learned through the death of all the people she held dear, some things were clearer than the light of day even if she didn’t understand it herself. She would have to accept it once of these days.

In this same way Molly felt it was only just that she stayed here with him. One last gift to him, because maybe she was a little selfish about it too.

“Even after all this time I cling to you.” She whispered, slipping her arms around his shoulders and falling into him. Beyond Caera, Tom had been her best friend and true support. She didn’t know how she could fathom a world without him in it. Even if this was an ill fated reunion. She wanted to make the most of it.

Tom smiled into Molly’s shoulder. He could feel the comfort there. “You’ll be okay, Margaret Hooper. You deserve only the best life and I believe you’re nearly there. I’m proud to have been a part of it.” It was only now that he let himself cry. He wasn’t alone in it anymore. He had this beautiful human being that he had missed.

He would enjoy every moment of these days.

The following day a letter arrived in the mailbox addressed to Miss Molly Hooper. Tom thought it was a bit funny because it was in a child’s handwriting but he knew who had sent it. He hadn’t been too surprised that one of the Holmes’ had his other address. The one who wore the nice suits were resourceful and it wasn’t lost on him that there were people milling outside his house.

“You didn’t have to call him it seems.” He said while passing the envelope to Molly before settling
for laying down on the sofa with a groan. He wasn’t feeling as good as yesterday. Molly began to fret over him but he only told her to read it. It would bring her some cheer, he was sure of it.

Molly conceded slowly as she looked at the childlike scrawl of the child. Miles actually didn’t have bad penmanship. It was boyish but held an elegance to it that was rare in any child’s handwriting that she had seen. The address came from a city she had never been to before but she knew it was in a countryside somewhere further from London.

She opened it and took out the sheet of paper that was inside.

*Dear Miss Hooper,*

*I’m writing to you from Mr. & Mrs. Holmes house. Mummy Holmes wanted me to visit and I’m glad I did. They’re nice people. I like their house. Sherlock said you were visiting an old friend of yours. I hope he’s nice. He seemed a bit odd on the phone. Mummy wants you to visit too. Could you while I’m still here? I could show you some things around.*

*See you soon!*

*Miles*

Expecting that to be it Molly began to fold the letter back up only to find something on the back. A photograph was attached to the back. It was a wallet sized photo of an elderly couple and Miles. It looked like it could have been taken recently. These must have been Sherlock and Mycroft’s parents. They looked sweet. She was glad to know he was being taken care of. Perhaps they could continue his course work while she was here. She would have to inquire about it.

“How’s he doing?”

“Good! I think he just wanted me to know that he was okay. He spoke to Sherlock too, so that also a good thing.”

“Do you want to talk to Mister Detective? I have a phone.”

Molly didn’t hesitate. She shook her head. “I’ll see him, it’s no big deal.”

Tom had turned to look at her. There was something about Molly that made him worry. She said one thing but she meant the other. He could tell that she worried. He knew that she had a reason to be. From what little he understood Sherlock was in a dangerous game.

“Let’s take your mind off of it, then.” Tom got to his feet and walked over to Molly and outstretched his hand.

In the days that followed Molly noticed a few things. First, that Tom was steadily getting worse but he tried to make her smile through all of that. Even if they had to put on the telly and find something to watch for most of the days. She found happiness within him. Second, she could feel the sadness creeping in as Tom got to the point where he couldn’t move from his bed. She spent most nights next to him making sure he was as comfortable as he could get. She went out and bought him food if they were low or anything he had an appetite for.

On the night before his last day he confessed one more thing to Molly. “I found your parents.”

She had jumped up and turned on a lamp so that she could see his face. “What are you talking about?”
“Your biological family. The Hoopers. Your mum died awhile ago but your dad is still alive. He’s living in Cardiff above a butcher’s shop. I visited him once and he told me to give you something.”

“What?” Molly’s head was swirling at all this information being thrown at her. Her dad was alive.

She briefly wondered why he hadn’t sought her out. He let her suffer in a home where she felt trapped and unwanted.

Tom turned towards the nightstand and gestured to the drawer. “There’s a box in there. I promised I’d give it to you if I ever saw you.”

Molly hesitated a moment. She didn’t know if it would change anything. This man had given her up without second thought. She just laid back down.

“You don’t want it.” Tom croaked from beside her. His eyes slowly slipped over the auburn waves that covered her head.

“I don’t know.” She breathed. “Did you seek him out, Thomas?”

“Yes and no. I had gone back to the home one day and he happened to be there talking to one of the missus. They introduced me as your friend when in truth I hadn’t seen you in years. He looked ill as if he too was on his deathbed. Who knows he might be? Could be dead already...it’s been a few years since I heard anything. Anyways he told me that this was his gift to you. His last gift. I don’t know if that helps in any way.”

Molly drew in a deep breath. “I’ll think on it.”

Tom touched Molly’s hand. “Just one more thing...” He waited until she was looking at him. “This is yours.” When she gave him a confused look. “This house. It suits you. If you want to live here at some point...feel free.”

“You can’t give me a house, Thomas.” She used his full name for effect. He was doing too much for her already.

“If it’ll ease your mind Molls, this was always going to be yours. Even if we never reconnected.”

“You’re too good to leave like this.” She curled up onto his side.

“I don’t know if I agree with that. I’ve lived a good life.”

Molly couldn’t think of anything else to say so she just shut her eyes and tried to feel something other than despair for him. He had told her many stories over the past few days about things that he had gotten to do. He had the makings of a truly amazing life. With that in mind she could find it in her heart to be happy to have gotten a chance to meet him.

When Molly woke up she felt cold.

She looked up at Tom smiling face and let out a sigh. “Yeah, you did.”

Tom had gotten everything in order before his passing leaving Molly with very little to do beyond sign some pages and deal with his burial. He didn’t want a big fuss which was good because Molly didn’t want to deal with anyone who would come out of the wood-works to express their condolences. She felt it enough.

She spent another two days following the burial in Tom - her house making sure everything was
fine. She was eating some soup for dinner when a knock came to the door.

She put her spoon down unsure who could be trying to contact her or Tom now. She slowly reached the door and peeked through the peephole. There was a man in a cheap suit and a stone face. She drew in a deep breath as she answered the door.

“Miss Hooper, I’ve come to fetch you. Mister Holmes needs you back in London.”

“Which one?”

“Excuse me...Mister Sherlock Holmes. There’s been an incident.”

Molly had either gotten really good at receiving bad news or she was beginning to feel nothing when it came to abrupt changes. She didn’t know. She just slipped back inside, shutting the door in the man’s face who she hoped wouldn’t take it personally. She needed a moment to gather her things.

When Molly arrived at Two Hundred and Twenty-One B Baker Street she took a long deep breath. It felt like she hadn’t been here in months when it had to have only been a week. It looked the same on the inside but from what little she had managed to pull out of Mycroft a lot has changed. Sherlock had managed to end the M problem, but there was a cost.

Mycroft told her that she would have to see that for herself considering they waited a whole three days to tell her about it. He had claimed because they wanted to spare her after already losing her best friend to an illness. She called bullshit on him.

It had made her worry all the same. She shouldered her bag and skipped up the steps and into the foyer. It was as dim as it always was. Molly began to start walking up the familiar steps when Mrs. Hudson’s door opened and out came Miles running. “Molly!” He surprised her with a hug.

“Hey!” She giggled, kissing his hair. She didn’t know what had come over her but she had wanted to do it.

“Mister Holmes is in a state. Mrs. H wanted me to stay down here until you got here.”

Molly looked towards the stairs. “Alright, well let me go deal with him then. I’ll call for you, I promise.”

He gave her a confident nod before ducking back through the door he had come from.

Molly squared her shoulders with a new confidence after seeing one half of her set of Baker Street boys. The other one required her service.

She rushed up the stairs, putting her bag down at the door before entering the lightly lit fortress of doom. She was quick to flick on the light switch before entering the sitting room where Sherlock was sitting in his chair.

Ignoring the apprehension she had she squatted down next to him and covered his hand with hers. “Sherlock.” He lifted his head and looked at her. He didn’t seem to register she was who she was for a moment.

She reached out and pushed his curls back. His face was unscathed but she didn’t miss the boot on his leg or the wrapped hand.
Another fire. How cruel.

“Molly…” His voice sounded hoarse.

“Yeah. I said I’d come back.” She whispered.

“You did.” His eyes which had looked so lifeless before had slowly started to glimmer again. He reached up with a little grunt to grab her hand. “I finished it.”

Molly smiled through the pain that echoed in her chest at seeing this strong man in such a state. She knew then that she couldn’t leave him even if he pushed her into trying. She loved him.