Redemption (Madness and Memory Part 2)

by emma221b

Summary

John and Kate have been keeping Sherlock's illness secret for weeks, but now they need Mycroft's help. Sherlock/OC established relationship. Warnings for references to mental illness, abuse and suicide

Notes

This story leads on from Madness and Memory, but can also be read in isolation. Kate is Sherlock's girlfriend, as introduced in The Girl in the Scarf.
Chapter 1

She should have known, should have remembered that the danger time is not when people are at their lowest. It comes later, when they finally start to come back up towards the surface, and then feel themselves sinking again. When they can remember how it felt to be drowning, and know with certainty that it is all about to happen again.

Everything had seemed calm, so calm. Sherlock had been quiet, but then he was often quiet these days. John was still spending the days with Sherlock, while Kate was back at work. They were both wary of leaving him alone, despite his protestations. ‘Baby-sitting,’ he called it, but Kate knew that in reality he feared the silence of being left alone. He was frustrated at not being able to work, but a possible date for a return to cold cases was already being discussed with Ed Harris. There were still issues that he wouldn’t or couldn’t discuss, and his days were still split between therapy sessions and sleep. Seeing him immobile for long period of the day seemed odd to Kate, but Ed Harris reassured her that it was Sherlock’s ways of managing his symptoms and the side-effects of the medication. ‘It will improve with time,’ he told her, ‘it’s his way of coping, best not to interfere with that for now.’

She couldn’t say what had woken her. The old fashioned alarm clock on the bedside table read ten past three. The bed beside her was cold and empty. She checked the bathroom and the kitchen. Both empty. His coat was gone, his phone when she rang it went unanswered. Panicked, she phoned John.

‘John, he’s gone. He must have found my keys.’ She had taken to hiding her keys at night, just in case, but in retrospect the back of the cutlery drawer probably wasn’t such an intelligent hiding place when you were dealing with a consulting detective.

‘I’ll be right up.’

She tried to track his phone on-line, but his account was of course, impossible to hack into. His phone was still ringing out. She sent him a string of text messages, with no reply.

‘Where would he have gone?’ she asked John. The look on his face said it all, neither of them knew where, but they both knew why.

‘Mycroft,’ Kate said suddenly, pulling out her phone. ‘He’ll be able to find him, won’t he?’

John nodded.

Mycroft, unsurprisingly was up and working. He listened to Kate’s hurried explanations in silence, then said only, ‘Of course, I’ll get my people onto it immediately.’

Kate barely had time to get dressed before he rang with information. ‘He’s at Barts, or rather his phone is. I’m on my way.’

‘Christ, the roof,’ said John

‘Why not the lab,’ said Kate, but even as the words came out of her mouth, she knew that he was right. Miraculously, they found a cab as they were running down the road.

‘You try the lab, I’ll go to the roof,’ Kate said to John, as they ran into the building.

She found him huddled up in a corner, his dark coat blending into the shadows, having a furious conversation with himself. Safe, then, for now.
‘Sherlock,’ she said warily, suddenly wondering if he was sleepwalking again. She had found him wandering the flat with nightmares several times in the past few weeks.

His face when he finally raised it off his knees to look at her told her everything, but he just shook his head slowly, as if speaking was too much effort. ‘I can’t Kate, I’m sorry,’ was all that he would say.

She sat with him there, vaguely aware of flashing blue lights below, until John came running onto the roof from the fire door. Sherlock did not even seem to register his presence. John took his phone out of his pocket and silently lifted it up in question. Kate nodded in silent communication. ‘Yes, tell Mycroft. Get some help up here. Keep him safe’.

Ten minutes later, Sherlock was being escorted off the roof. He held onto Kate like a life-raft. He hadn’t spoken another word. If it hadn’t been for that initial recognition, Kate would almost have believed him to be sleep walking. Shut down, catatonic. She knew exactly what was happening to him.

Mycroft was waiting outside his car at the bottom and took a step towards them. Kate shook her head, as she and John maneuvered Sherlock into the waiting car.

‘Sherlock, stay here with John, I’ll be back in a minute,’ she said softly. He sat back against the seat, eyes closed, unresponsive, trapped with his own demons.

She walked over to Mycroft. ‘Thank you,’ she said, quietly.

‘How long, Kate?’ he asked.

‘Three weeks, a little more.’

‘I warned you, Kate,’ he said; the words spoken with sorrow, not with malice.

‘I know. I told you that I would get him through it, and I am. John and I both are.’

‘Is he getting help? Professional help?’

‘Of course, but I don’t think that it’s enough, not anymore.’

‘You could have asked for help before.’

‘He didn’t want you to know. He didn’t want anyone to know. I’m sorry, Mycroft.’

‘Will he let me help now?’

‘I think so. I don’t think that he has a choice, that we have a choice.’

Mycroft nodded. ‘Who is his psychiatrist?’ he asked.

‘Ed Harris, I think that you know him.’

‘Of course, he’s a good man. He’s looked after several of my employees in the past. I’ll contact him; there is a clinic that the service uses, Ed Harris has admitting rights there. It would undoubtably be the best place for Sherlock to go.’

Kate hesitated, caught between the logic of what Mycroft was proposing and her desperate need to keep Sherlock safe with her.
‘Kate, we have to keep him safe. You, I think, can no longer keep him safe. You have asked for my help tonight, let me help him.’

Kate was surprised at this rare expression of compassion from Mycroft. She had never seen any expression of love from either brother, and this was the closest to emotion she had ever seen Mycroft convey.

‘He is my brother, Kate,’ he said, with feeling. ‘I won’t stand by and watch him destroy himself.’

Not a threat, thought Kate, but an expression of concern. How interesting.

‘He refused admission before,’ she said, ‘Ed Harris has suggested it many times, but now...’

‘Now, he does not appear to be in a condition to refuse anything,’ Mycroft said quietly. ‘Still, if Ed Harris can persuade him to agree to an admission, then that would be simpler than a section. Although it wouldn’t be the first time that it has come to that.’

‘He told me,’ Kate said quietly, then, ‘I want to take him home, Mycroft, back to Baker Street. We’ll contact Ed Harris from there, get him to come and see Sherlock and see what he says.’

‘There is only one possible option,’ Mycroft said quietly. ‘Only one way to keep him safe.’

‘I know,’ Kate said, ‘but not like this. Not in the middle of the night and without his consent. I want to get him back to a place that he knows and people that he trusts. He trusts Ed Harris, he’ll take it better from him than from a stranger in an unfamiliar place.’

Mycroft looked at her with interest, as if he was processing her intent. Finally he said, ‘My brother is very fortunate, to have found someone who cares for him as much as you do, but I won’t have him put at risk.’

‘Then put a guard outside the door, where we can call them if we need them,’ Kate said. ‘I’m not denying what needs to happen, Mycroft, I’m just trying to make it as gentle as possible for Sherlock.’

Mycroft nodded slightly, ‘Very well,’ he said, ‘and I will have a car put at your disposal for tomorrow morning to take him in the clinic. If there’s anything that you need in the meantime, anything at all...’

‘I’ll call. Thank you, Mycroft,’ Kate said, wondering why this display of compassion was threatening to reduce her to tears when nothing else had. She walked quickly back to the car where Sherlock and John were waiting.

He was silent on the way home, eyes closed, head resting against the back of the seat. John had procured a blanket from the paramedics, who Sherlock had refused to allow near him. The heating in the car was turned up full blast, but Sherlock’s hand, when Kate reached for it, was still icy cold.

Arriving back at the flat, Kate tried to ignore the second car which had followed them back, and was now parked outside 221B. Mycroft’s guards, of course, but for once she was grateful for them. This time she wanted Sherlock watched, wanted him kept safe.

Sherlock walked silently into the flat and threw himself down onto the sofa, half sitting, half lying, head resting against the sofa back, eyes closed.

‘You should get into bed,’ Kate said gently, sitting on the sofa next to him. ‘Try and warm up a bit, you’re still freezing,’ but he just shook his head and remained immobile. He didn’t protest, however, when she placed a duvet over him, just remained immobile, eyes closed.
‘Do you need anything? Lorazepam?’ she asked, but he just shook his head. ‘Shout if you want anything,’ she said finally, when he remained silent, before going to join John in the kitchen. John slid the door almost shut behind her, leaving it open just enough to enable him to watch Sherlock while they talked.

‘What did Mycroft say?’ he asked quietly.

‘He’s organising his admission to the clinic that Ed Harris talked about for this morning. I gave him Ed Harris’ name, but we ought to phone him first I suppose.’

John nodded, watching her face. ‘It’s the only option, Kate, you know that. When I think about how close it came..’

‘I know, I know,’ Kate said, sinking down into one of the kitchen chairs. ‘But it came out of nowhere, John. Did you see this coming?’

‘Not remotely,’ John said, seating himself so that he could still see Sherlock, who hadn’t moved since they had left him. Was he asleep? Possibly, although his breathing seemed too quiet for that. ‘He seemed - fine,’ John continued, ‘A little quiet maybe, a little withdrawn, pre-occupied, but that’s about it. I don’t think that any of us could have seen this coming.’

‘So what now?’ Kate asked. ‘I don’t know how to raise the question of an admission with him.’

‘And I don’t think that you should. I’ll phone Ed, get him to come round and see Sherlock. He needs him now more than he needs us. Look at him, Kate. Goodness only knows what’s going on inside that head of his, and he’s obviously not going to talk to us.’

Kate looked at her watch. 5.45am. ‘Perhaps we should leave it a few hours,’ she said hesitantly, but John shook his head. ‘He needs to know, Kate. Sherlock is his clinical responsibility after all, and if Sherlock had carried through with his plans its his head that would have been on the block in the coroner’s court. Besides, better for him to hear it from us than from Mycroft.’
He felt removed, disconnected, as if everything was happening at a great distance and he was watching it from some strange position inside his head. He was dimly aware of Kate sitting next to him, and then of the long walk down off the roof, wanting only to sit down somewhere warm and quiet. There were too many people, too much noise, too much light. Then there were a vast array of flashing blue lights, what were they doing there? He let John guide him to a car, and the door was shut behind him. That was better, quieter, fewer people, but still cold, so cold. A blanket settled round his shoulders, and he rested his head back and closed his eyes. The voices were quieter now, but still distracting; his father's and others that he didn't recognise. They were talking, discussing him. Why wouldn't they shut up? They were drowning out everything else; John’s voice, trying to talk to him, even the sound of his own thoughts, until it was easier to just let them talk and retreat to that tiny corner of his mind that was still his. To sit and observe them passively, rather than trying to argue with, or interact with them.

Then Kate was there, and the car was moving. He no longer knew or cared where they were going. If he remained still, then the voices might forget that he was there. Still and quiet, that was the way forward. Numbly he allowed himself be led out of the car and into 221B, throwing himself down onto the nearest available surface, letting Kate take off his coat and his shoes, and wrap something warm around him. He wanted to talk to her, to tell her how sorry he was, but it was impossible. He could only sit, relishing the warmth and the softness of the sofa cushions against his cheek. He couldn't think about this anymore; what he had wanted to do, what he still wanted to do, or did he? He just wanted it all to stop. He wanted peace and whiteness and absolute silence.

Time lost its meaning as he sat there, trapped in a strange twilight world between sleep and waking, unsure of what was real and what was dreams, or the product of his own mind, until a soft voice said, 'Hello, Sherlock.'

Gentle, understanding. He knew that voice, but from where? Reluctantly he opened his eyes and blinked to focus, trying to remember where he had seen this man before. Edward Harris, of course.

He licked his lips, which suddenly felt like sandpaper. ‘I’m sorry,’ he whispered.

‘You have nothing to apologise for,’ Ed Harris told him. ‘Can you tell me what happened?’

Sherlock shook his head slowly, closing his eyes again. Ed Harris allowed him a few minutes of silence before asking gently, ‘What do you want, Sherlock?’

‘I want it to stop,’ he said, eyes still closed. ‘All of it.’

‘Voices?’ came the gentle enquiry.

He nodded slightly, trying to ignore the pounding in his head.

‘Did you stop taking the haloperidol?’

He nodded again. ‘Sorry,’ he whispered, eyes still closed.

‘Can you tell me why?’

Sherlock shook his head slightly, acutely aware again of the texture of the sofa back against his face. Everything felt amplified, sounds were suddenly clicking back into place; the sound of the clock on the mantelpiece was almost deafening, the weight of the duvet around his shoulders threatening to
drag him into the very substance of the sofa.

Then there was a hand on his shoulder. ‘Try some slow deep breaths,’ a voice said. He did and everything faded back to grey, the noises decreased to their normal level, he felt calmer.

‘You need to be admitted,’ the voice said. ‘This morning, if you’ll agree to it.’

He wanted to protest, but suddenly he was too tired to care. And the promised clinic, with white walls, and calm silence had lost its terror. He nodded slightly.

‘I don’t - care,’ he said quietly. ‘I just want to sleep, but I can’t. They won’t let me.’

‘The voices?’

He nodded again. ‘You can sleep at the clinic,’ Ed Harris’ voice said. ‘Will you take some medication now? It would help, I think.’

He shook his head, unable to find the words to explain that he was too afraid. That medication might make him lose the little control that was left to him, that it didn’t feel safe; not here, not with John and Kate so close. Because if the voices gained control, he was afraid of what he might do, of the monster that he might become. If he stayed silent and quiet he could control it, but if he let his concentration slip for just a second - no, the risk was too great.

‘I’ll make some phone calls,’ Ed Harris was saying, with a final reassuring squeeze on his shoulder, and then he was gone, and there were just the voices and the inside of his head again.
‘He’s agreed to an admission,’ Ed Harris told Kate and John as he walked back into the kitchen where they were waiting. ‘Not that a section would have been a problem, but still, it’s easier this way.’

‘Did he tell you why?’ Kate asked. ‘The roof I mean, not the admission.’

‘He’s saying very little, he’s too shut down for that, but it would appear that he stopped taking the haloperidol and the auditory hallucinations are back. I would say that his voices had a lot to do with it.’

Kate frowned slightly, swallowed hard and then nodded, not trusting herself to speak.

‘He’s safe, Kate,’ Ed Harris told her gently, ‘that’s what is important. He didn’t carry through with his plans. This was entirely unpredictable, it was nobody’s fault and he is safe. Now we just need to get him the care that he needs.’

‘How soon can you arrange it?’ she asked.

‘As soon as possible - this morning, certainly. I phoned the clinic on my way over here to let them know it was likely that he’d need a bed. I just need to phone to check that they’ve got the staff in place, and then we can get him over there straight away. The sooner the better from the look of him.’

‘He’s so - silent,’ Kate said.

‘His head is a busy place,’ Ed Harris said. ‘Too much so to engage with us at the moment, The sooner that we can switch that off with medication, the better.’

‘He won’t take anything,’ Kate told him, ‘I’ve tried.’

‘As have I. He’s afraid of losing what little control he has left, I think. He’ll feel safer at the clinic.’

It all happened quickly, almost too quickly. Ed Harris made a few phone calls, while Kate packed a bag, and less than an hour later they were racing through the North London streets towards the clinic, on roads which were almost surreally empty at that time on a Sunday morning. Sherlock remained silent, looking dazed when Kate had told him that it was time to go. Compliantly, he allowed her to help him back into his shoes and coat, willingly taking a seat between her and John in the car. Quiet, too quiet. She found it unnerving and wondered what would happen when his silence finally broke. Ed Harris had seen them into the car, before heading for his office to retrieve Sherlock’s medical notes; promising to meet them at the clinic later.

Kate couldn’t fail to be impressed as the car took them through a set of electronic wrought iron gates and down a sweeping drive, to arrive in front of an impressive looking Victorian building.

‘I told you,’ John said, gauging her expression. ‘Its not exactly your standard psychiatric hospital. He’ll be well looked after here, Kate.’

Kate shot a glance at Sherlock, still silent and immobile, but when she squeezed his hand, there was a slight curling of his fingers in hers. ‘We’re here,’ she said quietly, and he nodded slightly, looking relieved if anything as he walked up the steps and into the cool marble interior of the entrance hall.
They were shown into an interview room, where Sherlock silently took a seat on one of the sofas, still holding Kate’s hand, and resumed what had become his customary position, head resting against the back of the sofa, eyes closed. He looked exhausted, Kate thought, as well he might after the night that he’d had. John took up a seat in a chair next to Kate. He looked exhausted too; the last few weeks had aged them all. He gave Kate an encouraging smile, and she suddenly found herself close to tears. Ridiculous after all that they had been through to be falling apart now, but this felt an awful lot like defeat. She wanted this part over with. She wanted Sherlock safe, and looked after, and then she wanted to go home and to curl up under the duvet at 221b and to sleep until this nightmare went away.

The door clicked and opened, making Kate and John jump. Only Sherlock remained motionless, too preoccupied with his voices to react to external stimuli. A nurse dressed in the clinic uniform of white tunic and blue trousers walked in, carrying a clip board. Blonde hair clipped up efficiently in a pony tail, late twenties, possibly early thirties she looked like someone who knew her job well and could deal with whatever it threw at her without allowing so much as a hair to come out of place. Kate felt her shoulders fall. Ed Harris had been right; this was absolutely the place that Sherlock needed to be, and if this nurse was representative of the rest of the clinic staff, then they would be able to handle him in exactly the way that he needed.

‘Sherlock Holmes?’ she asked. Sherlock remained motionless and silent, not acknowledging her presence in any way other than another slight tightening of his fingers against Kate’s, and she looked at him concerned, but his face remained blank. It was left to John to acknowledge the nurse, and to introduce himself and Kate.

The nurse considered Sherlock for a split second, then walking across to where he sat, squatted in front of him, and laid a gentle hand on his spare arm. ‘Sherlock, my name is Anna. I’m one of the nurses here and I’ll be looking after you for the next few days. Listen, I know that you’re really tired and that you probably just want to sleep, but I need to go through some admission questions with you before we can take you to your room. Can you bear with me for maybe ten minutes, so that we can get this done?’

Interesting, Kate thought. She knows that he’s not an idiot and she’s not treating him as one, but at the same time she’s pitching this at exactly the level that he’s able to take in at the moment, without patronising him. She’s also bypassing me and John, making him the centre of this, letting him stay in control.

Sherlock opened his eyes and looked at her, then nodded, almost imperceptibly.

‘Do you need anything? Some medication until we can get you to your room?’

He shook his head and looked down. ‘He’s been refusing to take anything,’ Kate said.

‘That's your choice, for now,’ Anna told him, ‘but let me know if it gets too much. Would you find it easier if I got Kate and John to answer the questions where they can?’

Again that almost imperceptible nod and a slight squeeze of Kate’s hand. ‘It's okay,’ she whispered to him, stupid really, when she knew that it was anything but.

‘If you need anything at any point, just let me know,’ Anna was saying, ‘I know that this must be very difficult for you, so we’ll get through this as quickly as possible and then we can get you to your room and get you some decent sedation.’

Again the slight nod of the head, but nothing else.
Anna gave him another minute or so, hand still resting lightly on his arm, making sure that he had nothing else to add. ‘Thank you,’ he finally said quietly, and Anna took her hand away and went to sit on the adjacent chair.

The questions were basic to start with. Date of birth, address, GP, next of kin and contact numbers, then previous medical history, drug history, allergies and moving on to his psychiatric history. Anna had most of information from Dr Harris she explained, but needed to complete the forms from a nursing perspective to give her a fuller picture of the background. Kate told her what they knew about Sherlock’s time in Elmhurst, keeping it as brief and factual as possible, watching the tension grow in his face as she did so, although he remained silent.

In the end it was Anna who said, ‘Sherlock, I’m going to go and get you some medication.’

‘I’m okay,’ he said dully, not opening his eyes.

‘Your body language says that you’re finding this difficult, and I would like to make it easier for you. I need to talk to you about the events surrounding your admission to make a risk assessment, and it would be better for you to be calm enough to do that.’

He nodded slightly, and Anna left the room, returning a few minutes later with a pot of tablets, which he took without looking at them. There were new ones in there that Kate didn’t recognise, but now was not the time to question it, and there was a relief at allowing someone else to take charge, especially someone with this capacity to detect Sherlock’s mood so quickly, and from such minimal cues.

Anna went briefly through the details of Sherlock’s recent illness and the events of last night, before turning again to Sherlock.

‘This is a voluntary admission, Sherlock, but I need you to sign the admissions document to say that you agree to the admission on that basis, and that you will abide by the clinic rules.’

He frowned, and turned his head slightly as if listening and considering and then as if with a wrench, nodded.

‘What are they saying?’ Anna asked gently. ‘The voices?’

‘Horrible things,’ he said, so quietly that Kate could hardly hear him even from his position next to her.

‘Things about me, about the clinic?’ Anna asked.

He nodded.

‘Do you think that they’re true?’ she asked.

‘I don’t know,’ he whispered, sitting forward now, eyes fixed on the floor. ‘I just -’ he paused unable to continue.

‘You want it to stop?’ she asked. ‘We can give you that here. We can sedate you, switch off the voices, let you sleep. Is that what you want?’

He nodded, miserably, still staring at the floor. So quiet, so defeated, Kate thought. So very different from his normal self.

‘I need you to sign the admission form,’ Anna said, handing him the clipboard and then a pen;
slowly, carefully, every movement careful judged so as not to startle him. He stared at the form, and Kate got the distinct impression that the two halves of his brain were doing battle with each other.

‘Sign it Sherlock, please,’ Kate said quietly from beside him. He looked at her properly for the first time since he had been on the roof, and in his eyes she saw fear, and confusion, and something that she had rarely seen there before - uncertainty. ‘Trust me,’ she said quietly, squeezing his hand. And slowly, reluctantly, he took the pen from her and signed the form.

‘Thank you,’ Anna said as Kate handed the clipboard back to her. As if on cue, there was a knock on the door, and a porter with a wheelchair came into the room at Anna’s soft, ‘Come in.’

‘I can walk,’ Sherlock said wearily with just a hint of his old stubbornness.

‘I know that you can walk,’ Anna said, ‘but I would prefer you to go in the chair.’

He shook his head, as if too tired to voice his objections.

‘Sherlock, you’re exhausted,’ Anna said gently, ‘and you’ve had a lot of medication. Let us look after you. Just for a little while, just until you’re well.’

Kate squeezed his hand again to show that she agreed and slowly, reluctantly he got up and got into the wheelchair.

‘Thank you,’ Anna said softly. ‘Now, Kate, why don’t you come and see Sherlock settled. John, if you stay here, Ed Harris will be along shortly and wants a word.’
There were corridors, long, white corridors, almost impossibly light and bright, making him squint and increasing the pounding in his head. Then doors, so many doors and locks. He found that strangely reassuring, the knowledge that he couldn’t get out of this place, even if he wanted to. He had been so afraid of this, of a place like Elmhurst, but this was nothing like Elmhurst. That had been old, musty, painted almost entirely in institutional green. This place was white, sparklingly white and chrome; all curved lines and soft edges. The staff were all immaculately dressed in beautifully ironed uniforms, like crew members in one of those science fiction shows that John used to favour and he had enjoyed finding flaws in the science in. ‘Clones, robots,’ the voices in his head whispered and he wearily told them to stop being ridiculous.

Kate was there, holding his hand as he was pushed down the corridor at a speed that made his head spin, or maybe that was the medication. He hadn’t recognised all of the tablets that he had taken, but something was making everything blur at the edges; not unpleasantly so, but he was glad for the security of the wheelchair around him. The seat, the back, the arms, encasing him, holding him safe, holding him together. Without it he had a strange sensation that he might just come apart. He felt insubstantial, a mist-like form of himself; as if last night he had done what he intended and was now just a ghostly imprint of his former self. He blinked hard against the sensation, and noted Kate’s concerned glance. Beautiful Kate; how to tell her that much as he appreciated her concern, he found it almost painful in its intensity. He hated knowing that he was hurting her, that what he had done last night had hurt her, but it was written all over her face. As she always said, she would make a dreadful poker player, she was incapable of concealing her emotions.

It would be better here, cleaner, more sterile, less people to worry about harming. Somewhere to sleep and to wait for it to stop hurting. Kate and John seemed to think that he was coming here to get well, but that was past him now, he knew with absolute conviction, and the voices backed up his belief. This was the best that he could hope for now. Peace and silence and enough drugs to allow him to sleep for days at a time.

They arrived finally at a room with a number on it, but his brain could not make it into any logical form. Anna used a fingerprint recognition device to open the door, little chance of escape then, good. They went through an antechamber lined with cupboards through a second door. A bed, a chair, a desk. All very clean, very new, very sterile. Voices whispered about operating theatres and procedures, and wearily he told them again to stop.

Almost without registering what he was doing, he got out of the wheelchair and sat on the bed, at Anna’s calm instructions. People were talking - Kate, Anna and another nurse who had arrived in the room, but their words made little sense. He let Kate take off his shoes, and wearily stripped off his clothes, putting on the proffered t-shirt and pajama trousers. How odd, they looked like his. Had they come from home? He had no recollection of bringing a bag with him, so how then had they appeared?

He was being asked to get into bed, and Anna was there with a blood pressure cuff. Suddenly inexplicably, he felt panic rise from deep within his subconscious. Half of his brain was screaming at him to get out, the other half calmly observing his own reaction and marking it as ridiculous. Confused he looked up at Kate, trying to reunite the two halves of his brain, to force his suddenly immobile limbs into action. Then her arms were around him, holding him safe, and murmuring in his ear, ‘It’s okay, you can do this.’

He wanted to tell her that it wasn’t a difficult thing to do at all, that it was an act of failure, not of
bravery to allow this, but the words wouldn’t come. Instead he wearily swung his legs up into the bed, and allowed Anna to tuck the sheets in around him, dispassionately watching the other nurse carry the clothes that he had arrived in away. He chose to ignore the voices screaming that this was his last chance to choose freedom, while Anna checked his blood pressure, his temperature, his oxygen saturations. It was all so unbearably familiar from the early stages of his illness, but then it had been Kate and John, and not these strangers performing these oddly intimate tasks.

This was what he had wanted, wasn’t it? So why now was it suddenly so hard? Then there was a scratch in the back of his left hand, as Anna inserted a cannula and he resisted the urge to pull his hand away. She smiled at him reassuringly. ‘Home straight now,’ she told him. ‘I just need to take some blood and then we can give you some sedation.’

There seemed to be vial after vial of blood, and then finally the syringes of medication. He looked at Kate, now on the other side of the bed, ‘Will you stay? ‘ he asked, suddenly lucid and a little scared. He felt like his sixteen year old self all over again, afraid of going to sleep in this strange place, of waking up not knowing where he was or why. ‘Until I’m asleep, will you stay?’

‘Of course,’ she told him calmly, reaching over to drop a gentle kiss on his forehead, the sort of kiss that a mother would give a child, and then his eyes grew heavy, the room began to blur round the edges and despite everything he felt himself sliding into sleep.
Chapter 5

Kate angrily blinked away the threatening tears, as Sherlock's breathing slowed and he slept at last. He looked dreadful, she observed with clinician's eyes, seeing him for the first time as the clinic staff would see him. There were bruise-like shadows under his eyes, despite all of the sleep that he had been getting recently. He looked gaunt and pale, his lips dry and cracked. He was probably dehydrated; how had she not noticed that?

'He's safe now,' Anna said gently. 'We'll look after him from here.'

Kate nodded, not trusting herself to speak. To her surprise, Anna came round to her side of the bed and enfolded her in a hug, which she gladly returned, allowing a few more tears to escape while her face was hidden in the shoulder of Anna's tunic.

'You've done an amazing job,' Anna told her. 'Getting him so far, getting him to agree to this. Now it's time to let someone else take the strain for a while.' She handed Kate a tissue from a box that had miraculously appeared, and Kate wiped her face and blew her nose noisily.

'Sorry,' she said. 'It's just seeing him like this -'

'We'll take good care of him,' Anna told her. 'Chloe, can you stay with Sherlock while I take Kate back to the interview room?'

'Of course,' the other nurse smiled at her, as she checked Sherlock's oxygen saturations and blood pressure again. 'He'll sleep for a while now. You look as if you could do with some rest yourself.'

'It's been a rough night,' Kate murmured, as she let Anna lead her back through a bewildering array of corridors to the interview room where John was waiting.

'You okay?' he asked, as she walked in.

She nodded, grateful for his comforting hug all the same. 'He's sedated,' she told him, as she took a seat on the sofa beside him. 'He seems very calm, surprisingly calm.'

'He knows that he needs to be here,' Anna said, taking up her original seat opposite them again. 'He's too tired to fight his illness anymore, and he's happy to let us take that responsibility for a while. It's when he starts to get better that the fun will start.'

John's lips curved up into a smile, despite everything. 'You seem to have worked him out fairly well for someone who's just met him,' he said.

'I have the benefit of Dr Harris' experience with Sherlock as well, don't forget.'

'Has he been in? Ed Harris, I mean?' Kate asked John.

'He popped in briefly earlier,' John said. 'He's gone to write up drug charts and brief the medical staff. He said that he'd be in later to talk to both of us.'

'I thought that it might be useful if I told you a little about the protocol from here in the meantime,' Anna was saying. 'Sherlock is currently under close observation. That's standard practice for most new admissions, but last night's events also classify him as being at high risk of further self-harm. We'll have a nurse in the room with him at all times when he's awake. When he's asleep, we'll watch him from the monitor room next door, and we can be in the room with him in under a minute if he
needs us. He won't be left alone, and he won't be at any risk.'

'I think that he's too shut down to do anything at the moment anyway,' Kate said.

'For now, yes, but fear can be a powerful motivator,' Anna said. 'And from what I've seen so far his mood can change rapidly. Panic, fear, anxiety, paranoia. He's experienced the onset of all of these within seconds, even within the brief time that I've had to observe him.'

'How do you know?' Kate asked in wonder. She had picked up on all of those apart from the paranoia, but how had Anna managed it?

'His body language, his facial expressions; we're very good at reading people here,' Anna told her. 'There's no magic to it. Some of it's taught, some of it you pick up with experience. Many of our patients talk little when they first come in to us, so you have to get very good at picking up non-verbal clues. When you have a patient like Sherlock who finds it difficult to talk about his emotions at the best of times, then it becomes even more important.'

'Ed has briefed you well,' John murmured.

'He told me about Sherlock weeks ago,' Anna said, then at Kate's expression of surprise. 'It's how it works here, didn't he tell you? They try to match a patient to a primary nurse before they're admitted. We're the people who see them on admission and stay with them for day shifts at least until we consider them stable enough to be left in someone else's care. We oversee their care plan, attend clinical decision meetings, liaise with their psychiatrist and other staff members, and if all goes well then we follow them up at home for as long as they need us.'

'The ultimate continuity of care,' Kate said in wonder. 'You wouldn't get that on the NHS.'

'It doesn't always work out,' Anna said, 'sometimes there's a personality clash, but generally patients find it reassuring to be looked after by the same people, especially with the client base that we deal with. Trust doesn't tend to come easily to them.'

'Or to Sherlock,' Kate said quietly.

'Exactly,' Anna said, watching her face, then almost abruptly, 'I know that this must be hard for you, Kate. You and John have looked after Sherlock for so long; letting go of that control can't be easy.'

'Actually, it's a relief,' Kate said with a frown. 'I was terrified that something would happen to him, that somehow what we were doing wouldn't be enough, but he wouldn't contemplate talking to anyone else. He wouldn't even see a CPN or a psychologist. Just Ed Harris and us.'

'That's why Ed Harris talked to me initially,' Anna told her. 'He wanted me to come to meet Sherlock as a CPN, in the hope that if he did need admission then he would have a familiar face to look after him; or more to the point, that it might convince him that an admission would be in his best interest.'

They were interrupted by a knock on the door, and then Ed Harris himself was there, shaking hands all round, and then with a slightly concerned glance at Kate, asking, 'How are you holding up?'

'I'm okay,' she said with a grateful smile for his concern. 'I'm just relieved that he's safe; and this place,' she looked around at the cool, clean lines of the interview room, 'is exactly what he needs. You were right.'

'I'm not going to pretend that it's going to be plain sailing,' Ed Harris told her. 'There will be setbacks even here, I'm sure, but it is what he needs. If I'm honest I think that it's what he's always needed. It's just taken a long time for him to be able to see that.'
'If John and I hadn't tried to keep him at home initially, if we'd allowed him to be admitted, then do you think-' Kate hesitated, but to her relief Ed Harris shook his head.

'He wasn't ready, Kate. He would have found it extremely difficult if he had woken up here, with all of his paranoia and delusions. It would have taken a long time for him to learn to trust the staff. No, I strongly believe that you and John did what was best for him at the time.'

Kate felt the reassuring squeeze of John's fingers against hers. 'You can't blame yourself for what happened, Kate,' he said quietly. 'He was getting better, we all thought that.'

'So what changed?' Kate asked Ed Harris. 'Why did this happen?'

'Another mood cycle, I suspect,' Ed Harris said, 'I was aware that the underlying diagnosis was probably rapidly cycling bipolar, although Sherlock has resisted all attempts at formal testing. From what you and John have told me, and indeed Sherlock himself, his mood can rise or fall over the space of twenty-four hours or so even when he's relatively well. I think that is exactly what happened. His mood dropped, so the voices returned, and it all got very dangerous, very quickly.'

'But the medication that he's on,' Kate said, 'that should have helped, surely.'

'He's refused any kind of mood stabiliser, so the medication wouldn't have helped the cycling. The antidepressants have helped his baseline mood, but they obviously haven't protected him from the lows as well as I would have hoped. The antipsychotics - who knows. He either hasn't been taking them, or they're not the right ones for him.'

'But the voices had gone,' John said. 'How does that work?'

'It would appear that it was the haloperidol that was controlling the auditory hallucinations, not the other other antipsychotic. When he stopped taking that, then they returned. It's not a disaster, we can re-juggle his medication while he's in here much more safely than we could in the community.'

'Lithium?' John asked.

'Would be the most effective treatment certainly, but I wanted to know how you both felt about that, knowing Sherlock's own previous refusal of it.'

'He hates lithium,' Kate said dully.

'But it is undoubtedly the most effective treatment for the severity of his illness,' Ed Harris persisted. 'It's an old fashioned drug certainly, but it would help the depression and the mood cycling; get him functioning again.'

'I think that we're out of options and should go for it,' John said. 'How about risperidone, would that work? For the auditory hallucinations, I mean.'

'That would be my other suggestion, and switch the olanzapine to quetiapine,' Ed Harris said. 'That should help both the depression and the psychosis. I think that we should hit this hard, while the sedation is there to reduce his awareness of side effects. By the time that he comes off sedation in a week or so, then the medication should be starting to take effect. Kate? Do you agree?'

'It's Sherlock's decision, surely.'

'You've seen him, Kate,' Ed Harris said kindly. 'He's not capable of making an informed decision about anything at the moment. We're going to have to make this decision for him.'
'Then give him whatever will get him well,' Kate said, after a moment's consideration. 'You're right, we've tried the soft option. When I think about what could have happened last night -'

'It's an aggressive illness, Kate,' Ed Harris said, 'Just look at the statistics. Something approximating a fifty percent risk of a significant suicidal attempt, with an eight percent lifetime risk of completed suicide. Lithium reduces that risk. For that reason alone it has to be our best option.'

'Did he try before?' John asked, 'At Elmhurst?'

'He says no, but then his memory of that time is patchy to say the least. Now that he's here, and his brother is aware of his illness, I see no reason not to try to obtain his old notes. They might explain a number of things that Sherlock himself is unable to fully remember, or piece together.'

'Has Mycroft contacted you?' Kate asked.

'Not long after John phoned me this morning. He's very concerned, but I've told him that I can't give him any specific details without Sherlock's consent.'

'And he took that without an argument?' John asked, dryly.

'Surprisingly, yes, although I suspect that he will contact you later, John, for details. Whether you give them to him or not is up to you.'

John looked at Kate in question. 'I don't think that Sherlock would mind him knowing,' she said, 'not now. I told him most of it last night, anyway. Tell him what you want, John. I'd rather he heard it from us, than starts doing his own digging.'

'As I say, that's entirely your decision,' Ed Harris told them, 'but from the clinic staff's perspective, you two will be the only people who will be given direct information about Sherlock's clinical condition. Once Sherlock has recovered enough to give his consent, then we can discuss who else he is happy to have that information shared with.'

'Thank you,' Kate said quietly, then asked, 'what now? I presume that he'll sleep for a while. Should we go home, come back later, or is there anything else that you need us for?'

'I would suggest that you both go home and get some rest,' Ed Harris said. 'Anna will contact you if there are any problems, or anything else that she needs to know, but I wouldn't anticipate any. We'll keep him sedated as I say, for the next few days at least. Then we can see where we are.'
Chapter 6

Waking, Sherlock experienced a lurch of disorientation. He was in a white, featureless room. He was lying in a bed that wasn’t his own, with crisp white sheets. For one horrible moment, he thought that he was back in Elmhurst, the scene of so many of his nightmares; but he was awake, and this room was different. There was a window opposite him, but the blind was down, giving him no clues. Lifting his hand to rub his face, he found a length of plastic tubing attached to it. This was familiar too. Memories, so many memories, and worst of it all this black, thick despair that was so familiar from before.

'You're awake,' came a soft voice, and turning carefully, aware of the tubing going into his hand, he saw a nurse in a white uniform, walking over from a desk to come and stand by the bed.

'Where am I?' he asked.

'In the Northwood Clinic,' the nurse told him. 'Don't you remember?'

'Not a thing,' he said, intrigued by his lack of panic at that. He felt very distant from everything that was happening to him, an external observer of his own mind.

'You've had a lot of sedation,' the nurse told him. 'It interferes with short-term memory sometimes. It should come back.'

He closed his eyes again against the rush of memories that this bought. Elmhurst, waking disorientated after ECT, being told that his memory should return. It hadn't then, would it this time?

'Sherlock, this isn't Elmhurst,' the nurse was saying gently. Ah, the paranoia; there it was. He remembered that from before too. The voices whispering that this nurse was reading his mind, that she knew what he was thinking, that she was part of the conspiracy to make him believe that he was ill, that this was real.

'You're safe here,' she was saying, and he believed her. It felt safe, it felt calm, despite everything, and he no longer had the energy to want to be anywhere else. He no longer cared about anything other than being able to lie in this bed, and sleep, and to stop thinking.

'Where's Kate?' he asked finally.

'She went home,' the nurse told him. 'I can phone her if you want. Get her to come and see you?'

But he shook his head as the blackness rushed in, catching him by surprise. Defeat then, the voices whispered. Something must have happened to bring him here. Something painful for both of them, something that he was trying very hard to forget. He swallowed hard, trying to suppress the memories.

'You need to sleep,' the nurse was saying, hand on his shoulder, and he realised that he had curled up on himself, arms wrapped round his head, as if trying to hide from the images that were now flooding in. He wanted to tell her that he needed it to stop, but she seemed to know. A gentle hand was uncapping the cannula in his hand, and the voices in his head faded into the distance, images becoming blurred. Sedation, he realised, she’s given me more sedation, and then the noises in the room faded too, and finally he slept.
Mycroft's car was waiting for them at the door of the clinic when they went to leave. John looked at Kate in question.

'It's better than a taxi, I suppose,' she shrugged. 'I'm not sure that I can cope with an overly cheerful cabby this morning. At least it will get us home, with minimum fuss, and at the moment that sounds very appealing.'

They sat in silence for a while, both looking out of the windows on their own sides of the car, caught up in their own thoughts. 'All those people, leading their little lives, completely oblivious to what we've been though,' Kate thought. 'Not realising how lucky they are to have their loved ones safe, and well, and with them.'

John waited until she finally turned away from the window and sat back in her seat, head back, eyes closed for a second in an unconscious parody of Sherlock's own position only hours before, and reached across to squeeze her hand. 'You okay?' he asked.

Kate opened her eyes and nodded slightly. 'I'm not sure I know what I feel,' she said finally, then looking at John's enquiring face, 'How about you.'

'Relief,' John said finally, 'I feel relieved, as you said to Anna at the clinic. He's safe, and he's not our responsibility any more, and there is a comfort in that.' He paused, 'We tried everything that we possibly could to keep him at home,' he said finally. 'And we failed - no, I don't mean that, I mean that I don't think.' He paused gathering his thoughts, 'I mean that despite everything that we did, his illness was too severe. He has to be in the clinic now, there's no other choice, and he'll be well looked after there.'

Kate nodded, looking down. 'I know,' she said finally. 'That's how I feel too. I'll miss him, and I wish more than anything else in the world that it hadn't come to this, but I'm glad that he's someone else's responsibility now, for a while at least.'

'You've been amazing, Kate,' John said quietly. 'I don't think that anyone else could have got him so far.'

'A psychiatric inpatient, you mean?' she said, attempting sarcasm, but realising that she just sounded bitter in the process.

'He agreed to it,' John said, softly. 'I never thought that he would do that. He agreed to an admission. And he didn't jump. Because of you.'

She nodded again. 'I'm too tired to think about this now,' she said, pushing her hair back from her face. 'I just want to go home, and sleep.'

And sleep she did, deeply, dreamlessly; the sleep of the exhausted, woken only by the ringing of her mobile phone when the light outside had already faded from grey to black. Reaching for her phone on the bedside table, she clumsily knocked it to the floor with drowsy fingers, and hauling it back up by the charger cable found a missed call from a withheld number. Seconds later it bleeped with a voicemail - Anna, telling her that everything was fine, but asking her to phone when she was free.

Walking into the sitting room, yawning, she dialed the clinic's number, already in her mobile phone from earlier, and was put through to Anna.
'Sorry, I was asleep,' she said. 'How is he?'

'He's doing okay. He woke up briefly a couple of hours ago. He's a little disorientated, and he's struggling to cope with the voices, so we've sedated him again, and that will be the plan for the next few days. Allow the sedation to wear off for brief periods of time, enough to let him to register where he is, drink if he's able to, tell us if he needs anything, but let him sleep for the majority of the time.'

'What about medication?' Kate asked.

'I haven't pushed it for today. We'll try to get him to start taking it in the morning, but he needs to learn to trust us first. He seems quite paranoid, Kate. Was that a feature before?'

'Not really,' Kate told her, frowning to remember. 'There were times I think, when his voices said things about me, and about John, but he never believed them.'

Because he trusts you. That will be an issue then, I think. We might need your help, and John's, to persuade him that we are what we say we are, and to get his cooperation.'

'Of course, whatever you need. Is there any point in my coming to see him this evening?'

'He's likely to sleep for some time, but if you want to come and see him, check for yourself that he's doing okay, then you can visit at anytime.'

'No, I think I'll leave it for today then,' Kate said wearily. 'I'll come in the morning, before my late shift. That is unless..'

'Work sounds like a good distraction,' Anna said gently. 'We'll take good care of Sherlock, and he's not going to up to much sensible conversation for a while. If you and John can pop in regularly, if only for half an hour, then he'll find that reassuring, having someone familiar there, but you'll have to be prepared for the fact that it might just be half an hour of watching him sleeping.'

'It's like patients on intensive care,' Kate said. 'Relatives come and sit with them, watch them sleep, and you're never sure if the patients know that they're there or not.'

'He'll know,' Anna told her. 'Patients here aren't anaesthetised, remember; the sedation level is much lighter, and familiar voices are reassuring, even in sleep.'

'I'll come tomorrow then,' Kate said. 'Thank you, Anna, and if there's any change overnight, if he needs me.'

'Then we'll phone, of course,' Anna assured her.

A few minutes later there was a soft knock on the door. 'I thought I heard you moving about,' John said, as she took off the lock and let him in. 'I'm cooking dinner if you want some.'

'Give me ten minutes to have a shower, and I'll come down,' Kate said.

'Did Mycroft phone?' she asked, when she was sitting on John's sofa some twenty minutes later, watching him cook.

'Of course,' John said. 'But he's being surprisingly well behaved. He told me a little about Elmhurst though. Did you know that Sherlock was sectioned for his admission there? Sounds as if they brought in the heavy squad; they had to call the police to pin him down and sedate him at home in the end. He wasn't going to go quietly.'
'I knew that he was sectioned,' Kate said. 'Not the rest. He always says that his memory of Elmhurst is patchy, I presume because of the sedation.'

'Perhaps,' John said, 'but there's a lot in that, isn't there? I have a horrible suspicion that what happened to him there will have a huge impact on what happens now.'

Kate sighed, 'It's the one thing that he'll never talk about. But it'll be in his notes won't it? Ed Harris said that he'd try to get hold of them now. I can't imagine that Mycroft will object, and if we know what happened before, then at least we can help him to deal with it.'

'Why do I get the feeling that it can't possibly that simple?' John asked.
Chapter 8

The voices were muttering before he even opened his eyes. Telling him that he needed to get out, to escape from this place. Two guards they told him, masquerading as nurses, but they would not listen to his requests to leave. Force was the only way; regrettable, but necessary. He was being falsely imprisoned, they told him; a plan born of layer upon layer of conspiracy and careful planning. Moriarty had done this. Moriarty back from the dead; how many lives did this man have? Twice he had seen him die, and yet he was behind this yet again. Swiftly he sat up, then sat, swaying slightly on the side of the bed, as dizziness assaulted him. What had they given him to make him feel so drugged? Barbiturates maybe, why couldn’t he remember? Something was tethering his right arm to the bed, he tugged on it and felt something snap, then a warm trickle down his arm that he chose to ignore. Free at last. He was wearing a t-shirt and pajama trousers. He looked round for a coat or a dressing gown, but there was no clothing in the room, just a desk and chair in the corner, both bolted to the floor.

A soft click of the door and a woman dressed in a nurse’s uniform came in, but the voices told him exactly what she was, screaming now; telling him to get out, get past her. The nurse was speaking to him, but her words made no sense. He braced himself and prepared to push past her to the door, but his legs crumpled as he tried to stand, and he fell. She caught him and lowered him to the ground, still talking softly, gently. The dizziness was getting worse, and he closed his eyes against the sensation and the voices. ‘I can’t,’ he told them, and there was relief in that, in being unable to do what they were asking him to do.

This person, this nurse, if that was what she was, sitting with her arms around him, now, reaching up to the bed for a pillow to put under his head, seemed kind. Not a guard after all then. Perhaps the voices were wrong. ‘Help is on its way,’ she told him gently, ‘just stay where you are for now, and we’ll get you back to bed in a minute.’

Hazily he looked up at her, blinking. This was a clinic, he remembered, someone had told him that it was a clinic. It wasn’t a prison, the voices were wrong. ‘Lies!’ they screamed, ‘you need to trust us, don’t believe their lies.’ But he was tired, so tired; too tired to fight them, too tired to fight anybody. ‘Sorry,’ he murmured, not sure if he was apologising to them or the nurse, perhaps both.’

Then there were hands, many hands, lifting his unresisting body back into bed. The mattress and sheets were almost unbearably soft as he sank back into them, then the re was the sharp scratch of a needle in his arm and he felt himself falling headlong into blackness, but he no longer cared.
‘How was the night?’ Anna asked Helen, the night nurse as she walked into the monitor room the next morning, her trained eye quickly picking up on the camera images of Sherlock’s sleeping form in the room next door.

‘He tried to get out of bed at about four, pulled out his cannula, would have ended up in a heap on the floor if I hadn’t caught him in time. Other than that it was fine.’

‘Was he aggressive?’

‘No, he seemed more bewildered than anything else. I don’t think that he knew where he was. He even apologised. We got him back to bed and gave him some more sedation, and he’s been sleeping ever since.’

‘Voices, do you think?’

‘Possibly, it’s difficult to tell at this stage isn’t it? I didn’t hear him talking to anybody else, but then he didn’t seem able to respond to me either, so perhaps.’

Anna picked up Sherlock’s notes and her book, and headed into his room. The soft click of the door as she checked his blood pressure and oxygen saturations heralded Chloe’s arrival.

‘Sorry, delays on the Northern Line,’ she murmured as she picked up the observation chart from the bedside table, and started to write the numbers down for Anna, drawing in his blood pressure with a neat hand.

‘That’s fine, we’ve got enough staff on today to cover anyway,’ Anna told her, then indicated with her hand for Chloe to come and join her at the desk, where she filled her in on the events of the night.

‘We’re going to raise his observation level after last night,’ she finished, ‘Helen shouldn’t have left him on his own after that really, its more by luck than by chance that he didn’t injure himself. Plus if someone had been there when he woke up he probably wouldn’t have got out of bed in the first place. I’d rather someone was with him, asleep or awake for the next few days.’

‘Sounds sensible to me,’ Chloe nodded. Then looking across at the sleeping figure in the bed. I think this is the worst part of an admission, you know. When all they can cope with is sedation and sleep. There’s so little that we can do to make them feel better.’

Anna smiled at her. Chloe had been her trainee when she had first come to the clinic. Fully trained in both adult and psychiatric nursing, but with a lot to learn about the more complex methods of the clinic. She had been a good student, and was becoming an excellent psychiatric nurse. Caring, empathic, but still lacking the edge of control that Anna had. Still, Anna was confident that she was the right person to be her ‘wing-man’ as it were with Sherlock, taking over from her on her days off, once she felt confident enough to leave Sherlock to someone else’s care. ‘We do make them feel better,’ she said quietly. ‘We provide reassurance when they’re awake, and we provide good nursing care while they’re asleep; taking care of their bodies so that their minds can heal. Don’t underestimate the importance of that.’

‘I prefer the talking part,’ Chloe said, ‘that’s when you make the biggest impact.’

‘You mean that’s when you get to win the argument,’ Anna said, with mock severity.
Chloe grinned, ‘I can’t deny that I like getting people round to my point of view, but it’s satisfying, isn’t it? When you can help them to see things from a different perspective, prove to them that there’s a way forward.’

‘I think that even you mind find it a challenge outthinking this one,’ Anna said. ‘His IQ is off the scale and he’s invented a career based on logic and reasoning.’

‘Sounds like a challenge to me,’ Chloe replied swiftly, then frowned. ‘I never understand why people with high IQs don’t realise what’s happening and do something about it earlier, though. If they really are that logical, then logic must surely dictate that what’s happening with them isn’t normal, that the voices that they hear can’t be real.’

‘But it’s the ultimate example of their own minds acting against them, isn’t it?’ Anna said. ‘That’s entirely the point. It seems logical because it’s a product of their own brain. That’s why people with high IQs are more, not less likely, to suffer from mental illness, and to present later, because they conceal it and manage it themselves for a long time usually before they ask for help.’

‘Well, I hope that you’re feeling well-rested,’ Chloe said quietly. ‘Because I think that it’s going to take a while to get Sherlock to a point where you feel happy to leave him.’

‘I think twelve days of twelve hour shifts was my record,’ Anna said, ‘I’ll be fine. The medication will kick in eventually. The challenge will be to get him to trust us enough to take it.’

‘And if he doesn’t?’

‘Then we’ll cross that bridge when we come to it. Besides, I’ve never met anyone who can resist my powers of persuasion for more than a few days.’
Kate headed over for the clinic after work. She had been distracted all day, and she had known it, but somehow this was still easier than the early days of Sherlock's illness, when she had spent her days at work constantly worrying about what was happening at home. Parents must feel like this when they first left their children at nursery, she had thought. Was something happening that she should know about? Was he okay? Did he need her? It wasn't that she didn't trust John, it was just the uncomfortable and probably entirely irrational feeling that she should be there; that there were situations that she could deal with better than anyone else, even though she knew that wasn't true. Even when Sherlock himself had encouraged her to go back to work; even though she knew that he would split his day between therapy with Ed Harris, and sleep, and she could help with neither of those.

This time though, she knew that he was safe. She knew that he was being better looked after at the clinic than he ever could be at home, and yet letting go of that control, and of the concern, was still difficult. It felt good to be doing something normal, though, and amid the children with viral infections and rashes and the sprained ankles and minor head injuries she somehow managed to forget Sherlock for at least short periods of time.

She had phoned the clinic before leaving for work that morning, and John had texted after his visit that morning to tell her that Sherlock had slept through his visit, but seemed calm, and well looked after. And that was what mattered, wasn't it? That should be all that mattered. She knew that he would get well, knew that eventually she would have him home and that life would resume some resemblance of normality, and yet knowing it and believing it seemed to be two entirely different prospects at this moment in time.

Walking through the doors of the clinic that evening, she took in what she had missed last time. The security at this place was astounding. There were two security guards discretely positioned next to the door. The receptionists had a screen in front of their desk, well-hidden in the ceiling, but ready to be dropped at the push of a button. The main part of the building was entirely sealed off from the entrance atrium. Cameras were everywhere, and she wondered exactly how quickly they could go into lock-down, or how often they needed to.

Announcing herself at the desk, she only had to wait for a few minutes before the second nurse from yesterday was there, to escort her to Sherlock's room. 'I'm Chloe,' she told Kate, as she let Kate through door after sealed door. 'I've been helping Anna to look after Sherlock.'

'You were there yesterday,' Kate said. 'I remember. How is he?'

'He's been asleep most of the day,' Chloe said, 'but the sedation should be wearing off soon, so hopefully he'll wake up while you're here. He needs a few more days of sedation yet, though I'd say. Give him time to recover from what happened on Saturday night, and to get used to being here.'

They had arrived at the door to Sherlock's room, and Chloe stood back to let her in to the antechamber first, and then checked the small screen by the second door, before opening that one also. The screen gave a black and white view of the room within, Kate realised, to prevent staff walking in and compromising a patient's dignity. If they could provide those for the NHS then it would prevent a lot of awkward moments all round.

'Kate's here,' she said to Anna, who was changing the empty bag of intravenous fluid hanging next to Sherlock's bed for a full one. Still not drinking then. Anna smiled at her. 'Come and sit with him, if you want,' she said.
Kate was struck again by how clean and neat the room looked, but then with two nurses looking after one patient it wasn’t surprising that nothing was more than a centimetre out of place. Sherlock was lying on his side, back to the door, fast asleep, and Chloe brought across a chair and placed it next to the bed, so that Kate could sit and watch his sleeping face. John was right, he looked calm, and well looked after. The nurses were obviously doing their job well. There were no signs of his turbulent night, which Anna had reported back to her.

She reached across to kiss him on the cheek, and sleepily he opened his eyes and blinked slowly, as if trying to focus on her.

‘Hullo,’ she said, smiling at him.

He closed his eyes again for a few seconds, and then opened them again as if to check that she was still there. He looked dazed and unsure. He lifted a hand to rub his eyes, ignoring the length of plastic tubing that was now well-secured to it with tape.

‘Are you real?’ he asked bluntly.

‘Of course, I’m real - here,’ and she lifted a hand to stroke his cheek. His hand came up to cover hers, fingers curling round hers lightly, and she reached to kiss him again, on the forehead this time.

‘Are the voices telling you that I’m not real?’

He nodded; eyes searching her face for reassurance, scanning it almost, as if weighing up the evidence for himself.

‘Don’t listen to them, Sherlock, listen to me. I’m real, and I’m here, and I love you, and nothing is going to change that.’

He remained silent, but his fingers tightened further around hers as he dropped his hand back to the bed, holding hers tight.

‘Is it getting any easier?’ she asked, finally.

‘I don’t know,’ he said, sounding dazed, ‘its difficult to think. Sleeping helps.’

‘Then sleep,’ Kate said quietly. ‘Until it gets better.’

Anna was there, she realised, a silent presence on the other side of the bed. ‘Do you want some more sedation?’ she asked Sherlock, and Kate picked up on what she had, the slight tension on Sherlock’s face as if he was listening to an internal dialogue. ‘Switch off those voices?’

He nodded, rolling over onto his back to look at Anna.

‘Can you take these pills for me first?’ she asked, offering him a pot of tablets, but he shook his head.

‘Not today,’ he said, still sounding distracted. Kate’s eyes met Anna’s across the bed, wondering if she should say something, but Anna shook her head at her slightly, indicating that she should remain silent.

She had a tray of syringes in her hand already, and Sherlock’s hold on Kate’s hand loosened as the sedation took hold. ‘I’m sorry,’ he murmured, but he was asleep before she could ask him what he was apologising for.

Once she was sure that Sherlock was deeply asleep, Anna indicated with her head that Kate should
join her at the nurses desk, where he was less likely to overhear them.

'He'll take the medication eventually,' Anna told her. 'It often takes a few days for patients to get to
that point. Some of it is about trust, the rest, I think, is about feeling able to make a positive step
towards recovery. He's not ready for that yet.'

'But he's here,' Kate said stupidly, 'why would he be here if he doesn't think that he can get well?'

'He's here because he doesn't want to be a burden,' Anna explained gently. 'Its easier to be looked
after by strangers than to face the guilt of what he might be putting people he cares about through.
The voices aren't helping that. That will be exactly what they're telling him, over and over. That he's
just hurting you and John, that you would be better off without him in your lives. That was why he
was on the roof, Kate. That was what he was trying to achieve.'

'So how do we get him over that, if he won't take medication?'

'He's getting haloperidol intravenously. That should switch off the voices eventually, and the
sedation will help the rest. As he just told you, it's slowing him down, making it difficult for him to
think, and if he can't think, then he can't access those negative thoughts which are part of the vicious
circle of depression. Once the voices stop, he should be able to take medication, and then its just
giving that a chance to kick in.'

'Can I sit with him for a while?' Kate asked.

'Of course, stay as long as you like.'

And so Kate sat, and watched him sleep, and wondered again at the complex range of emotions that
the human mind was capable of. She felt fiercely protective of Sherlock in his vulnerability, and yet
at the same time came that overwhelming relief at knowing that he was safe. A small part of her was
angry with him for not having talked to her, for being on that roof and not even trying to involve her
in that decision. Even though she knew logically that he hadn't been responsible for his actions at the
time, that the voices had been firmly in control, still, a small part of her was furious with him.

Sherlock would have been fascinated by this conflict. His mind worked in black and white, shutting
off emotions most of the time before they had time to evolve, before they had time to complicate; at
least it did when he was well. It wasn't that he didn't feel things, as she had discovered early in their
relationship, it was just that he discounted anything that wasn't rational, wasn't logical. When he was
working all that existed for him was the case and the logical facts, nothing more. The assault of
emotion was one of the things that he had found it hardest to deal with during his illness, he had told
her. The irrational and illogical nature of it, the inability to keep those doors in his head shut, and the
disintegration in his thinking that had resulted.

Better to shut it off then, for now, Kate thought, to shut it all off, until he could deal with it. He was
here, at least. He was safe, he was well looked after. Time to try and shut off some doors in her own
head too, to keep those nagging doubts shut away until she had time to process them. Sitting here
with Sherlock, watching him sleep she felt oddly calm. Safe, for now, and in the right place to get
well; finally after all those weeks of waiting and watching and trying to persuade him to accept more
help.

Anna came over and rested a quiet hand on her shoulder. 'You okay?' she asked gently. She had
been watching Kate's face, Kate realised, reading the conflict within.

Kate looked up at her and smiled gratefully, 'I'm fine,' she said, and it was half true. 'I'm trying to
convince myself that the glass is half full and not half empty.'
'We'll get him well, Kate,' Anna told her, and there was a confidence in her tone that Kate carried with her as she kissed Sherlock goodbye and let Chloe escort her back to the main door and into a waiting taxi, despite her protests.

'Go home, get some food and some rest, let us take care of him, and try not to worry,' Chloe told her as she closed the door of the taxi behind her. And somehow when they reached the door of Baker Street and the taxi driver told her that the trip was on the clinic's account, she wasn't surprised. And with a degree of guilt she realised that she was glad that Sherlock was safe in the clinic, that much as she missed him, he was where he needed to be, and there was a reassurance in that.
To say that Sherlock Holmes was frustrated was an understatement. He wanted to sleep, he needed to sleep, and yet Anna was steadfastly refusing to give him any more sedation. She had allowed him intravenous haloperidol when he woke up that morning. There was lorazepam and a whole host of other tablets sitting in a paper cup on the table next to his bed, and that, it appeared, was the deal. All or nothing. He either took the medication prescribed to him, or he had to remain awake, staring at the wall opposite his bed or out of the window, and longing for the sleep that wouldn't come.

The voices were quieter today, that was something. Subdued, he presumed, by the haloperidol. His father's voice was absent entirely, and it was mainly the crowd effect of unknowns, with their constant stream of commentary on his actions, or lack of them, on his thoughts. 'Why is he just lying there? What does he think is going to happen? What does he hope to achieve by being here?' And then over and over again. 'Why didn't he jump? Because he's a coward, always has been, he should have jumped.'

It was easier though, to tune them out, these tormentors. Arguing didn't work, he remembered that from before. Better to let them simply wash over him, like a radio program that he didn't wish to listen to, but was unable to turn off. Ed Harris had taught him to try distraction. Television, books, radio, and talking when he could. Distraction worked, replacing the internal voices with external stimuli, but today he couldn't face it. Anna had offered to turn on the television for him, but the voices would be in there too, he knew, and they would only be louder for the attempt. Music too, even his beloved Beethoven, brought only painful memories. Only sleep enabled him to switch off the voices and the pain, and his sleep these days was deep and dreamless, punctuated only for the last few days, by brief periods of waking. Then would come the gentle voices of the nurses, the offer of the cup of water; declining food, declining everything other than the syringe and the blessed slide back into sleep.

At times it reminded him uncomfortably of the quietness and release brought by heroin in his student days, before the rehab, before the realisation that this was one thing that not even he could control. The need for it was the same, the promise of peace and silence and sleep. Self-medication, Ed Harris had called it; an attempt to control the uncontrollable. He didn't believe that Sherlock had an addictive personality, he believed that the addiction had somehow been a side-effect rather than the main event. With the recollection of that discussion came a flood of uncomfortable memories of his brief time in rehab. Of the hours of protesting, uselessly that he wasn't an addict, of refusing to cooperate with group therapy, of refusing to talk to the counsellors there; of the long, silent sessions, staring at the floor, with the staff sure that he would crack first. He never had. He never could. Too many memories, push them into a room and close the door. It was surprisingly easy to lock them away again, almost as rapidly as they had escaped.

It was in rehab that he had learnt to use sleep as an escape, reversing his sleep wake schedule, sleeping through the days, giving him the silent freedom of the television room when it was empty through the night, when he could finally have the solitude that he craved. But he had lost the knack of sleeping on command, it seemed. For sleep to come since his illness required medication, medication that Anna would not allow him to have, not until Ed Harris had come to see him, anyway. He had been here for four days, she told him. Four days of sleep, and silence, and allowing himself to be cared for. Ignoring his body, shutting down his mind, still wishing beyond everything that this could be permanent. That somehow these careful nurses might make a mistake, that an overdose of medication might find its way into his arm and not be noticed; that there was a simple solution to all of this, a way out without guilt for Kate and for John, and without the need for the courage that he had lacked up on the roof.
He considered this dispassionately, as if from a distance. The emotions that had felt so immediate in his brief periods of waking over the last few days, the despair that had flooded through him, leaving him capable only of curling in on himself, silent and shaking, were somehow almost entirely absent. A temporary respite, allowing him to analyse the situation. The residual sedation from the night and the haloperidol had, he presumed, between them finally numbed his brain to a point where it no longer hurt, provided that he could keep all the doors to the rooms in his head closed; an art that he had learned long ago. The blackness remained firmly shut in the back of his head, quiescent for now, but it would return, he knew. He had to use these few minutes of logical thought to persuade Anna to let him sleep, before it washed over him in a torrent, filling his nose and mouth with its blackness and filth; before it could drag him under again.

'Why won't you take the medication?' Anna asked quietly, from her seat beside the bed. 'Just the lorazepam and the pericyazine if you want. It would help,' but Sherlock shook his head resolutely.

'Why not?'

'Because there's no point,' he said, sitting up and resting his forehead on his knees, both hands wrapped round his curly head, as if he could somehow push away the thoughts inside. How fast they escaped the doors in his head, how quickly the walls came tumbling down, and the blackness returned.

'They would make you feel better,' she repeated for what felt like the twentieth time that morning. She was starting to regret her comments to Chloe of only a few days earlier. Sherlock Holmes was proving to be a tough nut to crack.

'Intravenous sedation would make me feel better,' he persisted, his voice muffled by his arms. Anna had never before come across a patient who could remain so logical with this depth of depression, even with the remnants of the sedation on board. The combination turned the majority patients into amenable zombies, who would dazedly do as they were asked to do, at least until the depression lifted, but not Sherlock. His depression remained profound, and yet this refusal of medication persisted, despite his acceptance of physical care. Food too, was persistently refused, as was any meaningful fluid intake. He would accept sips of water, but that was all. That was why she was so adamant that he had to talk to Ed Harris today, to see if he could find a way forward from here, because she was rapidly running out of ideas.

'Sherlock, I'm trying to help,' she said finally. And somehow, he knew that she was, and it was the simple honesty of that, that finally cracked through his defences, as the emotions continued to flood in.

'Then help me,' he said, removing his hands from round his head, and turning his face towards her on his knees without moving it. There was desperation in his voice, and an edge of despair and panic. It was a look that she recognised. Stripped back, vulnerable, defenceless, the look of a man who had reached the depths of the fall, and had no way of clawing himself back up again. A man who knew beyond anything else that he could not, and would not recover from his illness. And then she understood. The arguments, the refusal to take medication, the submission on his admission. She understood why Sherlock Holmes was here.

'You can beat this,' she said quietly, without any attempt to explain how she knew. 'You believe that there is nothing left, that the best that you can hope for is sleep, and silence, but it's not true. This is your illness talking to you, Sherlock, whether directly or indirectly, nothing more. You can get well, you just have to let us help you.'

He remained staring at her for several minutes, as if trying to process what she had just said, as if wanting to believe it, and then finally closed his eyes, rested his forehead on his knees again, arms
wrapped round them, and remained, statue-like, trying desperately to hide the tears that threatened to come, until his body betrayed him, despite his best efforts, and the shaking of his shoulders gave him away.

Despair, most powerful of all human emotions, and one that got to Anna every time. She had been warned about Sherlock Holmes; about his hatred of physical contact, from anyone other than those he felt closest to; about the autistic traits, but Anna’s instincts had never let her down before, and when her tentative touch on his shoulder wasn’t shrugged off, she sat on the side of the bed, wrapped her arms around his thin shoulders, and rocked him gently, like a child. He started to cry in earnest then, great racking sobs, unaware and uncaring of what Anna or anyone else might think. And somehow the tears brought not humiliation, or even despair, but release. A strange sensation that after all these weeks and months of the attempt at control, of metering out what he was feeling into words and actions that wouldn’t betray him, that would neither upset Kate, nor concern John, nor prompt Ed Harris to insist on an admission. That finally here in this clean, white, almost silent space, with this near stranger who seemed to understand what he in the past had been unable to voice to anyone, this raw and unfiltered emotion was somehow not only accepted, but entirely appropriate.

He had the strange sensation that there was no further left to fall, that he had reached the very bottom of the pit that he had been falling into for all of these weeks. He was tired, too tired to fight this deluge of emotion, too tired to do anything other than to let go, to exist in this moment in whatever form that took. And there was a comfort too in knowing that he was safe, and that it didn't matter, that none of this mattered; because this was the place that he had been fighting so hard to avoid, not just in this illness but ever since his escape from Elmhurst. Nearly twenty years of fighting the darkness alone, of concealing the depth of it even from those closest to him. Of working through it, taking tablets to enable himself to continue functioning, of hiding away when it became overwhelming.

There was a release in letting go of all of that, of knowing that it was out in the open now. That Kate knew, that John knew, that concealment was no longer an option. That his old life was now irrevocably lost to him, but whether that was a good thing or a bad one, he no longer knew or cared. Child-like he could only be here, and trust, and allow himself to be looked after. The nurses were kind, but more than that, they were empathic, like Kate. They knew, they understood, without the need for speech, or explanation. And Anna, who seemed to be by his side constantly in those last few dark days, reminded him uncannily of Sarah, the psychiatric nurse from his Elmhurst days, who he had come to depend on so entirely, and who had never once, betrayed his trust. It wasn't a physical resemblance as much as her way of voicing his deepest fears, without explanation; the feeling that she instinctively knew what he needed and gave it to him, without prompting.

He had no idea how long he sat there, wrapped in on himself, openly weeping, uncharacteristically grateful for Anna's presence. Finally the wave of emotion passed, and exhausted he sank back against the pillows that Anna had rearranged behind him, and closed his eyes.

Anna was speaking to him quietly, reassuringly. About trust, and the future, and how he could recover, but he let the words wash over him, unable to process them for now.

And when silence fell, he opened his eyes to check for her presence, and found her holding out a paper cup of medication. Without a word he took the cup and swallowed the tablets, too tired to protest. Then he sank his head back against the pillows, closed his eyes and almost instantly fell asleep.
Chapter 12

He was still sleeping when Ed Harris arrived for his appointment. 'No luck?' he asked Anna, observing Sherlock's sleeping figure.

'He hasn't had any more iv sedation since the early hours of the morning,' Anna told him. 'Just some halperidol to try to keep the voices under control. This is more exhaustion that anything else. He took some lorazepam and pericyazine with a lot of persuasion earlier, but he's still refusing everything else.'

'Has he said why?'

'No, its strange. He's hit rock bottom, I think. He's ready to accept help, he wants help, and yet the idea medication holds all kind of demons for him that he just can't put into words. There's a sense of futility there, certainly, but what else is underlying this is more difficult to work out.'

'I've brought his Elmhurst notes across with me,' Ed Harris told her. 'They hold some clues. He refused medication there - for weeks. That was part of the rationale behind the ECT. Then later on he started concealing tablets, disposing of them. He's never been what you'd call a compliant patient.'

'I can imagine,' Anna said with a small smile. 'He's certainly put me through my paces this morning.'

'Arguments?' Ed Harris asked.

'Yes, and then he just dissolved. Completely fell apart. Tears, despair, then he took some tablets and fell asleep before they could possibly have kicked in.'

Ed Harris nodded. 'He was like this before, at home; oscillating between frustration and despair. He had Kate there to pick up the pieces then. How did he deal with it without her?'

'Surprisingly well; too well in a way. He asked for help, let me be there for him, but from what you've told me I think that's a sign of how deep this depression goes. He seems to trust me, and that has come far quicker than I would have predicted, but again I think that he's fallen too far to care about consequence. The paranoia has gone because he no longer cares.'

'And yet at Elmhust the paranoia was a predominant feature, much more so than this time. I would interpret the trust differently. I think that he trusts Kate - and John Watson too. They've persuaded him to come here, and so he choses to believe that this place is safe.'

'Do you think that they can persuade him that the medication is safe too?'

'Very possibly, or perhaps I can. He trusts me too, I think, for the same reason. Let's see what I can do to convince him.'

When Sherlock woke, Ed Harris was sitting by his bed.

'How long have you been there?' he asked, still dazed by sleep.

'Not long, ten minutes perhaps. I didn't want to risk missing the chance to talk to you.'

'I fell asleep,' he said stupidly.
'Tough morning?' Ed Harris asked.

Sherlock rubbed a hand across his eyes, and left it there. 'They wouldn't give me any more sedation,' he said, 'and then - I don't know. Everything just - crumbled.'

'You accepted your illness,' Ed Harris said mildly. 'I would see that as a positive thing.'

But Sherlock shook his head, 'I'm too tired to do anything else,' he told him; Anna's theory was correct after all, then. 'I don't care what happens. I just want to sleep, and not to have to think.'

'How are the voices?'

Sherlock considered for a moment. 'Quieter,' he said, surprised.

'Because you've stopped fighting,' Ed Harris told him, watching his face for a reaction. 'Whatever your interpretation, you have finally found some level of peace with this, some degree of acceptance of what has happened to you.'

'Perhaps.'

'So if you have accepted it, why won't you take the medication that can treat it?'

Sherlock opened his mouth to say that there was no point, then frowned and closed it again, realising that this might not be the reason after all. If there was no point, then he should take it. The worst that it could do was nothing, it was more than that. There was fear there, but of what, he couldn't discern.

'What do you think will happen if you take it?' Ed Harris persisted as if reading his mind.

'I don't know.'

'And if you don't take it, what then?'

'I don't know that either'. He swallowed, acutely aware of his dry mouth and lips, and then if mind reading yet again, Anna was there on the other side of the bed, offering him water.

'You don't have to know,' she said quietly. 'You just have to trust us.'

'I do - trust you,' he said, 'I just - can't.'

He closed his eyes again, ignoring the whispering that was getting louder in the back of his head. The doors wouldn't stay shut, he could feel the despair creeping in again, becoming overwhelming.

'Tell me about the voices,' Ed Harris was saying. Mind-reading again, how did he do that?

'I can't shut them out,' Sherlock told him. 'I try to ignore them, it works for a while, but they always come back.'

'They come back when you try to fight this. Because they are a product of your own mind. Because they are expressing all the things that you are yourself trying to suppress. What do they say?'

Sherlock sighed. 'Irrational things.' He paused and then continued slowly, as if fighting his own inclinations to remain silent. 'That this is a conspiracy, that Moriarty is behind this even from beyond the grave, that the medication will poison me, or worse still turn me into an automaton, incapable of rational thought.'

'Is that what you're afraid of?'
'Perhaps.'

'How well is your brain functioning at the moment do you think?'

'Barely at all,' Sherlock closed his eyes in resignation. 'I never said that this was rational.'

'It doesn't have to be. Sherlock, you've been here before,' Ed Harris told him. 'I read your Elmhurst notes, what remains of them anyway. You refused medication then too, and the paranoia, the belief that you were being poisoned was there then also.'

'But there was a conspiracy at Elmhurst; I was right,' Sherlock said, opening his eyes and considering Ed Harris, as if all of this was just adding fuel to his paranoia.

'From your father?'

Sherlock frowned, and Anna could see pain cross his face at the memory. 'I don't - remember,' he said, so quietly that she could barely hear him from where she sat.

'Because of the ECT,' Ed Harris said; a statement, not a question. He sighed. 'Memory problems as profound as yours are an uncommon side-effect. The first course I can understand, and while they affected your childhood memories they shouldn't have affected your memories after the treatment cycle. That was due to the second cycle, and the rationale behind that and what happened in the intervening period are more difficult to extract from your notes than I would have hoped.'

'Ask Mycroft,' Sherlock said, closing his eyes, 'Or ask John to, Mycroft is more likely to tell him than you, I think. I can't think about Elmhurst now, I don't want to think about it. But if piecing together what happened there is necessary, then I don't mind John, or Kate, looking into it.'

'I think that what happened to you in Elmhurst is probably very relevant to what you are experiencing now,' Ed Harris said calmly. 'But you still need to take medication, Sherlock. Whatever we discover about your past doesn't alter that.'

'And if I don't?'

'Then you are likely to stay as you are, depressed and paranoid for a period of at least three to six months, possibly permanently. That is the natural course of this illness. Without medication you would have to stay here, because it is the only way that we can guarantee your safety.'

'That doesn't sound like a bad option,' Sherlock said mildly, although his face told a different story.

'I haven't finished,' Ed Harris told him. 'Long term intravenous sedation would not be an option, although oral sedation would be. You would have to start eating and drinking, spending periods of time out of bed. In short we could keep you sedated to a point where you would be less aware of your surroundings, but the depression would still be there. If you continued to refused food and drink then ECT would be our only option, and that is absolutely the last thing that I would want to subject you to.'

Sherlock Holmes closed his eyes again, memories of similar conversations at Elmhurst flooded in, then sat up abruptly, head resting on his knees, curled up, rocking slightly.

Anna was beside the bed in a second, rubbing his back gently, looking at Ed Harris sharply, surprised at his shock tactics. 'Nobody wants that for you, Sherlock,' she said gently, 'we're just trying to explain that not taking medication for weeks at a time is not an option. You've been here five days already, your body needs food. You have to start eating, or your body will starve.'
But he remained as he was, curled up, ignoring all attempts by either Ed Harris or Anna to communicate with him. Eventually Anna, with a nod of assent from Ed, went and fetched the syringes of medication that were waiting in the prep room next door, and when Sherlock's hands finally relaxed from where they were clasped around his knees, laid him flat, and uncurled his unresisting body into a more comfortable position for sleep.

Then, somewhat reluctantly, she called Chloe to sit with Sherlock while she and Ed Harris retreated to his office to try to work out where they went from here.
Chapter 13

'I've never seen you do that before,' Anna said, when they were finally sitting down, and Ed's secretary had disappeared to make them both tea.

'Do you think that it was a mistake to provoke him like that?'

Anna shook her head, 'I've worked with you too long to think that you would do something like that accidentally,' she said, 'although I have to say, the thought did cross my mind initially. Shock tactics aren't usually your modus operandi.'

'He's a rational man, even now. He needed to know. I would say that his voices needed to know, but that sounds as if I'm colluding with his delusions.'

'It's almost like a split personality thing, isn't it? Its extraordinary. Its as if all of the irrational thoughts, all of the suspicion, have been pushed onto the voices. So on the one hand you have this very vulnerable, almost childlike individual who just wants to be helped, but he's constantly doing battle with these...'

'Demons,' Ed Harris said quietly, 'that's how he terms them, and they've had control of his head intermittently for a very long time, much longer than this current episode of illness.'

'You make it sound as if schizophrenia could still be a diagnostic option.'

'Split brain, as they used to term it. Yes it does sound a little like that doesn't it? But no, I still think that the original diagnosis is correct. I think that it's something more complicated than that. What we are dealing with Anna, is memory, walled off, locked away inside of his head from childhood. This is a man who has spent most of his life trying not to remember, and then the ECT at Elmhurst took away his ability to remember, until he no longer knows what is real, and what isn't.'

'You mentioned abuse in his admission notes - physical abuse. From his father?'

'Yes, and James Harrison, his old psychiatrist, seemed to think that that had a lot to do with his original illness. Interestingly all record of that has been removed from his Elmhurst notes.'

'How is that possible? Medical notes are a legal document.'

'Neil Simmonds, the clinical director at Elmhurst at that time, took over Sherlock's care when James Harrison left. He faced a GMC hearing for his management of patients there, and Sherlock's case was one of those discussed. I would imagine that he removed certain key documents illegally in an attempt to preserve his career.'

'Did he succeed?'

'He got a year's supervised practice, and diverted into research. The Child and Adolescent Psychiatry community is a small one, and nobody was prepared to give him another clinical post after his dismissal from Elmhurst.'

'Was he really that bad?' Anna asked.

'I was on his original disciplinary hearing, Anna. His treatment of patients was - unconventional to say the least, bordering on sadistic at time. If Sherlock Holmes has a problem with trusting health care professionals, then Neil Simmonds has a lot to do with it.'
'And the medication issue?'

'Possibly. There are records of a stand off over Sherlock's discharge; left in the notes no doubt by Neil Simmonds as a record of Sherlock's unstable state at the time. To me they read as if he deliberately provoked Sherlock into an extreme reaction towards him, and then used that to force him to take medication that he didn't want. It was sledge-hammer tactics, psychiatry at its worse, using a section to strip a patient of all choice, all control. For a vulnerable teenager with a history of abuse, who had recently lost his mother, it's hard to think of a more destructive management strategy.'

'How was he not destroyed by this?' Anna asked slowly. 'By rights, Sherlock should have gone the way of so many other troubled teenagers. Drugs, alcohol, self-harm, the slow slide into self-destruction and the destruction of others. Yet look at what he's achieved, despite repeatedly refusing to engage with other health care professionals. How on earth did he manage that?'

'His brother, oddly enough, had a lot to do with it I think. He's seven years older; he effectively parented Sherlock after his discharge from Elmhurst, and while their relationship has never been an affectionate one and has often been difficult, he gave him what he needed. Stability, boundaries, someone to pick up the pieces. And when Sherlock did fall into the almost inevitable drug dependency, he had him whipped off to rehab and kept there until he had proved that he could stay clean. Mycroft has managed Sherlock's life since he was sixteen, and surprisingly, Sherlock has generally allowed him to.'

'And yet now, he stays away.'

'He's been phoning me daily for updates, but here's something interesting. He seems to have handed Sherlock's care over to John Watson and Kate. Another conundrum for you.'

'Sherlock seems to think that he knows what happened in Elmhurst.'

'And that John Watson would be the best person to get that information out of him. Exactly.'

'But will he be willing to give us that information? Or rather to give it John to pass on to us?'

'For the sake of his brother's sanity, I think so. Either way, he's the best chance that we have of unravelling whatever happened at Elmhust, and what happened at Elmhurst, I'm sure, is the key to getting through to Sherlock now.'
Chapter 14

Kate was met at the front desk by Chloe, as she had been every day since Sherlock's admission. He had been asleep for her last few visits, but still there was something comforting about being here with him; knowing that he was being looked after, knowing that he was safe.

'How he is?' she asked Chloe, as they walked towards Sherlock's room, down clean white corridors. Kate was always amazed by how light and bright this place was. The wonders of private healthcare.

'He's had a tough day,' Chloe told her quietly. 'We've pulled back on the sedation, trying to get him to take it orally instead or getting it intravenously.'

'And he still won't?' Kate asked.

'Won't or can't, I think the latter. Anna's tried, Ed Harris has tried. Maybe you'll have more luck,' Chloe told her with a smile as they reached the door to his room.

Sherlock was lying with his back to the door, staring at a pot of medication on the table by the side of his bed, as if he could make them disappear by looking at them hard enough, or as if there were answers to be found if he could just find the right angle to consider them from. At the click of the door, he rolled over to watch Kate come into the room. He looked better, she thought. Less haunted, less tired, the dark shadows under his eyes almost gone. 'Hullo,' he said, and when she came across to the bed to kiss him on the cheek, he reached up and held her face against his for several minutes, not wanting to let her go.

'Tough day?' she asked conversationally, when he eventually let his hand drop down to the bed, and she pulled up the chair to sit as close to the bed as she could.

He met her worried gaze, and held it knowing that she would understand how he felt without the need for words. Very quietly, she came and sat on the bed, pulled him towards her and held him tight, one hand cradling his head against her shoulder. Wishing, not for the first time in this illness, that she could take all of the fear and misery out of his head; knowing that all she could hope to do was to be there for him.

Chloe had let herself out of the room with a quiet click and Anna, seated at the desk, was doing her best to make herself as invisible as possible.

'I wish that I could make this easier for you,' Kate said finally.

'You do,' he told her, still not moving. 'Just by being here, you do.'

Eventually he lifted his head and she stroked his hair back from his forehead, keeping tight hold of his hand as he rested back against the bed.

'You've been here a whole five minutes,' he said quietly, 'and you haven't told me to take my medication yet.'

She smiled, 'Since when did telling you anything ever work?' she asked.

He shook his head, 'It's not that I don't want to. It's just -'

He lifted her hand and placed it on his face, closing his eyes at the feeling of her warm palm against his cheek. Fear, Kate realised. He's afraid, but why?
'You're afraid of losing yourself in this,' she said finally, and he nodded almost imperceptibly.

'But why?' she blurted out, too confused by this idea to approach this sensitively. 'Sherlock, you can't function like this. You're feeling horrible, why not take the tablets that will make this better?'

He shook his head again, 'I did take them, Kate, remember? For almost two years after I left Elmhurst. They slowed me down, stopped me thinking. They made me -'

'Ordinary,' Kate said softly. 'Of course. You think that your mind is all that you have. Everything else is transport. But it's not true, don't you see? I don't love you for your mind, you idiot, I love you for you.'

'It's not as simple as that, Kate,' he said sadly.

'Then make it that simple,' she said, picking up the pot of tablets, and looking at the contents. 'It's not forever, Sherlock, it's just for a while; until you're better, until you're functioning again.'

He shook his head and turned his face away into the pillow, eyes closed.

'I would rather have you sane and ordinary, than mad and brilliant,' she said quietly. 'That is probably very selfish of me, but it's the way that it is.'

He turned his head to look at her, and she handed him the pot of tablets. 'Trust me,' she said, as he took them from her.

He shook the pot of tablets, trying to identifying them from the colours and the marks on them, and then deciding that he just didn't care. Kate was right. It was simple, and the simple truth was that things couldn't get any worse than they were now. Without allowing himself time to think about it, he lifted the pot of tablets to his lips and upended the lot into his mouth, washing them down with the cup of water that Kate handed to him, with a cough and a grimace. Too many tablets. Next time he'd have to remember to take them one at a time.

'Thank you,' Kate said quietly, kissing him on the forehead. 'That flat's too big without you. I don't want you in here forever.'

'I don't deserve you, Kate,' he said sadly.

'True,' she told him, with a small smile, 'but you've got me anyway, so you might as well make the most of it.'

She sat there with him, holding his hand, talking quietly, until finally he fell asleep. And even then, she sat there, watching his sleeping face, until she felt Anna's gentle hand on her shoulder.

'Were there sleeping tablets in that lot by any chance?' Kate asked, without looking round at Anna.

'Of course. Better for him to sleep with those than with iv sedation tonight.'

'I should go home,' Kate said, suddenly exhausted.

'You did well,' Anna told her, 'I doubt that anyone else could have persuaded him to take them. Neither Ed Harris or I could, certainly. So what was it in the end? What was stopping him from taking them?'

'He was afraid that they'd make him stupid,' Kate said with a smile. 'That was only a part of it, I think, but it was a big part of it. He didn't want to become an automaton. He's talked about that
before; about how the tablets he took as a teenager made him feel removed from everything, disconnected. That's why he stopped taking them before.'

'Times have changed, medication has changed,' Anna told her.

'Try telling him that,' Kate said quietly. 'But it's a start, isn't it? It's a start at least.'
Chapter 15

Kate could see from the light in the front window of 221A that John was home, even before she let herself through the street door. She was still debating whether to bang on his door to update him, when the door to his flat opened, and he stuck his head out.

'Tea? Wine? Help me with an ethical dilemma?' he asked as she shut the street door behind her.

'Tea first, wine later, I think,' Kate said as she followed him back into his flat, and sat down on the sofa with a grateful sigh.

'So how is he?' John asked from the kitchen.

'Miserable, but awake at least. Did you go and see him earlier?'

'Yes. He was asleep, but I had a very interesting conversation with Ed Harris,' John said, bringing two cups of tea over, and placing one in front of Kate.

'Go on.'

'He seems to think that finding out what happened to Sherlock as a teenager - when he was admitted before, might be the key to helping him through this episode,' John said.

'But he won't talk about it,' Kate said, 'I've tried.'

'He can't remember, Kate, that's a large part of the problem. Ed Harris says it's come up in therapy sessions. He can remember bits and pieces, but nothing concrete.'

'And the medical notes aren't helpful?'

'Turns out that they're incomplete. Someone has removed chunks of them, and even with what's left, it's a case of trying to read between the lines. You know what they're like, Kate. They tell you the bare bones of what was going on, but I get the impression that there was an awful lot going on behind the scenes that nobody wanted documented. What has Sherlock said to you about it?'

'Very little. Only that it was only six months or so after his mother had died; his father had beaten him badly, he got very depressed, stopped eating and drinking and ended up in Elmhurst. He seems to think that his father wanted to lock him up and throw away the key. I get the impression that his father was paying off one of the psychiatrists to keep him there, then his father had a stroke and Mycroft got him out. That's about all that he'll say.'

'That's more than he's ever said to me about it - other than that day when we came back from Wales to prevent Mycroft from breaking you two up, he's never really talked to me about it at all.'

'So what's the answer? You could try and track down the medical and nursing staff from Elmhurst, I suppose, see what they remember. But it was nearly twenty years ago, John.'

John tried not to smile and failed. 'Do you really think that they will have forgotten him?' he asked.

'No I suppose not. So is that the plan?'

'Part of it, yes. Sherlock, apparently has also suggested that I talk to Mycroft. He was there after all. He would know what happened.'
'Ah. I see the problem.'

John sighed. 'It's a double problem isn't it? The first problem is that I'm not sure that I feel comfortable investigating Sherlock's past like that. It feels wrong somehow to be finding out things that he himself doesn't know.'

Kate shrugged. 'That's the easy part. Talk to him, John. Ask him what he thinks. He's still in there, he still has his own opinions. You just have to catch him at a time when he's able to tell you what they are, and if they're cutting back on his sedation then there should be ample opportunity over the next few days to see what he thinks.'

'Let's hope so, because I'm not doing this without his agreement.'

'Talking to Mycroft?'

'Precisely. That's the second problem.'

'You can only try though, can't you?' Kate said. 'And he has offered to help. He does want to help, I think. And why wouldn't he tell you what happened. Its not as if he's implicating himself after all.'

'But he might be implicating his father.'

'True, but he's dead, John, so what difference does it make?'

'That's not what I'm worried about.'

'You've lost me.'

John sighed, and contemplated his hands, clasped on his knee now, not wanting to meet Kate's eye for the next part of what he had to say. 'What if the abuse that Sherlock went through from his father - what if it was worse than we think, worse than he remembers. What then? That's a can of worms that I'm not sure that I want to open.'

'Maybe it has to be opened,' Kate said quietly. Then when she realised what John was hitting about. 'Oh - you mean - no, I don't think so John, I really don't. Not that. I think that there was physical abuse there, emotional too, by definition, but sexual abuse? No, it doesn't fit the pattern.'

'Have you ever asked him?'

'It's come up in conversation, and he says no. His father despised him, at least that's Sherlock's take on it. When he was drunk, his father used to talk about beating the devil out of him. It sounds very much as if it was anger that motivated him, not desire. Besides, survivors of sexual abuse tend to have - scars shall we say related to the abuse, that transmit to - God, this is difficult. You know what I'm saying...' Kate tailed off.

'I think so,' John frowned, equally uncomfortable at the thought of discussing Sherlock and Kate's sex life. 'You're saying that you think that you of all people would know. But he never had a relationship until you came along, Kate. That's not normal for a man in his thirties.'

'His issue was trust, not sex, though. You know that. He had casual partners, he just avoided the emotional component. It was an itch that he had to scratch, a biological function, he just didn't want to complicate it with emotional ties.'

John let out a breath that he hadn't realised that he was holding. 'So it's unlikely.'
'Very unlikely in my opinion, but even if you do turn up something unexpected, I still think that its would be better to know now. Get the whole lot out in the open, whatever it is.' Kate paused, 'John this whole illness has come round from Sherlock trying to push everything into a room and lock the door. Push it into that box of his if you prefer, that's an image that he's used time and time again with me. Now that the box is open, we have to see how deep it goes. He has to pull the whole lot out, while he's in the clinic, while he's safe, no matter how painful that may be, because otherwise I don't see how he can get well.'

'Ed Harris says much the same,' John said quietly.

They sat in silence for a while, before John asked, 'Do you want to be there? When I talk to Mycroft I mean?' But to his surprise, Kate shook her head.

'I think you'll get more out of him on your own; but more than that. I'm not sure that I could sit there and listen to him describe exactly what happened to Sherlock in that precise and unemotional way of his. I'd complicate things, by being there, even if I could put my own emotions aside.'

'Don't you want to know what happened? Aren't you curious?'

'I want to help, Sherlock,' Kate said firmly, 'but for myself, if I'm honest - no. I just want to clap my hands over my ears and sing loudly. Sherlock isn't the only one who prefers to avoid things that they find difficult. But I'll help you as much as I can, John - for Sherlock, not for myself.'

'So where do I start, do you think?' John asked.

'With the notes, maybe, the Elmhurst ones,' Kate said. 'I think that we should treat it as an investigation, and I'll help in any way that I can. As long as it doesn't involve talking to Mycroft about it.'

John nodded. 'I'll head over to the clinic in the morning. See what I can get out of the notes, maybe start trying to track down some of the staff from the clinic, but I'm not approaching any of them until I've got the go ahead from Sherlock. How does that sound?'

'Good,' Kate said, 'Very good. We'll need some kind of release document from Sherlock too, won't we? To get people to tell us what happened. Neither of us would discuss a patient without one.'

'I'm still officially his GP, remember? So I could play the professional exchange of information card, but yes, I think that you're right. I'd rather do this as transparently as possible. We can get Ed Harris or Anna to countersign that he has the capacity to make that decision at the time, and then it should be watertight.' He stood up. 'Now how about I cook us both some dinner and we open that bottle of wine?'
Chapter 16

Heading over to the clinic bright and early the next morning, John was unsurprised to find Sherlock still sleeping. Ed Harris had, however, arranged to have John installed in an office with a computer and a telephone, so that all investigations could be done from the clinic.

'Mycroft Holmes' suggestion, actually,' he told John. 'He's pointed out that any information that you uncover could be dangerous for Sherlock if it got into the wrong hands. He doesn't want anything to leave this building. This way whatever you uncover can eventually be filed with Sherlock's notes, and will be subject to the same security procedures.'

'Makes sense,' John said with a nod.

Mycroft Holmes' influence was evident even here, and within an hour John also found himself furnished with a security pass, and access to Ed Harris' secretary for any typing or admin support that he needed. He was just in the process of logging onto his computer with his new IT password, when there was a soft knock on the door and Anna came in, carrying a stack of notes.

'Coffee is on its way,' she told him with a grin. 'I couldn't carry both, but I think you'll need the coffee if you're going to try to make any sense out of this lot. They defeated me, anyway.'

'Too much missing?' John asked, as he stood up to take the notes from her, and flicked them open curiously.

'And too much not documented at all,' Anna told him. 'Looks to me as if the nursing staff were writing one thing and doing another, towards the second half of his admission at any rate. I'm sure that their motives were good. Sherlock tells me that I remind him of Sarah, his primary nurse from Elmhurst, and the one who apparently took a job looking after him for several months at home after his discharge. He certainly feels nothing but gratitude towards her, and he trusted her, which says a lot.'

'Can we track her down?' John asked, interested in this new information, but Anna shook her head.

'I tried via the NMC website yesterday,' she said. 'She's not listed. So either she's not nursing anymore, or she's got married and changed her name.'

'Or she's working abroad,' John said. 'If she'd emigrated then she wouldn't necessarily still be listed here. I'll see what I can find. Sherlock still asleep?'

'Yes, but he's stirring. Give me an hour or so though, will you? I want to try to get him into the shower and at least starting to eat today - that's the target. I suspect that it may take some persuasion.'

'As someone who's been through that phase with him before- I can only wish you the sincerest of luck with that,' John said with a grin. 'It's not easy to get him to do anything that he doesn't want to do at the best of times.'

'I can be very persuasive when I want to be,' Anna told him with a smile of her own.

'I'm sure that you can,' John said softly, holding her gaze just a second too long, then looking away with a wry smile. 'Sorry, sorry. That was inappropriate.'

Anna laughed slightly, 'Against the rules, anyway,' she said, as she let herself out of the room, but had there or had there not been a soft 'unfortunately' as the door clicked shut behind her?
John shook his head, deciding that now definitely wasn't the time to think about this, and settled down to work his way through the stack of notes.

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Heading back to Sherlock's room, she found him awake, and staring out of the window.

'Not talking, at least not to me,' Chloe said to her quietly. 'I'll leave you to it, if thats okay. I'll be next door if you need anything, but I get the impression that you'll have more luck without me here.'

'How is it?' Anna asked, walking round to the far side of the bed, so that she was between Sherlock and the window, which he was still trying to stare out of.

'Odd,' he said, after a significant pause.

'Odd how?' she asked, 'Can you explain what you mean?'

'Everything feels tilted slightly,' he said. 'Tilted and numb.'

'Is the numb good or bad?' she asked.

'A little of both, I think,' he said, finally looking away from the window and focusing on her. 'That's the medication kicking in I presume.'

'Exactly. Speaking of which I've got your morning tablets here. Can you take them for me?'

'Do I have a choice?' he asked, a sharper edge to his tone. Defensive, verging on angry, Anna identified. Today could be even more interesting than she had anticipated.

'There's always a choice,' she said quietly, then when he refocused his stare on the window again, 'Sherlock, I am not your enemy. Let me try to help.'

He shook his head slightly. 'Is it always this difficult?' he asked finally.

'For some people yes, but everyone is different.'

'I don't want to take the medication,' he said.

'You took it for Kate, last night,' she said calmly.

'And now I feel horrible,' he said. Again that edge of irritation, of anger.

'Headache?' Anna asked.

'Among other things, yes.'

'There are paracetamol in the medication pot for that. Its a common side-effect.'

'What happens if I don't take them?' he asked, sitting up slowly, taking the pot from her, and shaking it to examine the tablets.

'Then you don't get better,' she told him bluntly. 'And eventually we'll have to resort to an NG tube and give you food and medication that way. Nobody wants that for you, Sherlock.'

'So what would you suggest?' he asked, still staring at the tablets.

'Stop fighting this,' she told him. 'Try to switch off that brain of yours and just try to let us tell you
what is best for you for a while.'

'And that would be?'

'For today - take your medication, try a shower if you feel up to it, have some breakfast. Small steps, but important ones.'

He frowned and shook the pot again. 'Do you want to know what they are?' she asked.

'No,' he said firmly, picking up a tablet out of the pot and swallowing it with the proffered glass of water, then another, then another, until the pot was empty.

He was unsurprised to see a pen torch in Anna's hand, and opened his mouth without being asked to show her that he'd swallowed them. He remembered that from before.

'Now show me your hands,' she told him, which he did without argument.

'And now keep your hands there, while I get the lithium out from where you've hidden it,' she said calmly.

He closed his eyes in resignation, but did as she asked; sitting forward to enable her to lift his pillows, pull out the tablet he had placed inside the pillow-case, and sweep the bed for any other hidden tablets.

'Not keen on lithium?' she asked.

He shook his head.

'Did your recognise the tablet from before?'

'Partly, yes, but the metallic taste in my mouth when I woke up was a big clue.'

'Have you hidden any of the others?'

He shook his head again, slowly.

'So why hide the lithium?'

'I just told you, because I didn't want to take it.'

'So why not just tell me that?'

He frowned. 'I don't know,' he said confused. 'It just seemed simpler to do it that way.'

'To see if you could?'

'Partly I think, yes.'

'To stay in control,' Anna said calmly.

'Is that what you think?'

'Thats what I know,' she said, with a small smile. 'Its classic psychology, Sherlock. I tell you that you need to trust me, and to do as you're told. You make a good display of doing what you're told, while still proving to some small part of yourself that you're in charge. What would you have done with the tablet?'
'I have no idea,' he said wearily.

'Will you take it now?'

'Are you going to give me a choice?'

Anna sighed, and held up the tablet so that he could see it. 'I'm going to propose an experiment,' she said. 'That should appeal to the biochemist in you. Try taking your tablets, as prescribed, for a week. Start with the hypothesis that we might just know what we're talking about here, and be proposing the correct treatment. If at the end of a week you're not feeling any better, then we can sit down with Ed Harris and work out where we go from there. How does that sound?'

'Sensible,' Sherlock said warily, 'but not necessarily logical.'

'Go on,' Anna said intrigued, from her seat beside the bed.

'The medication will take more than a week to reach its full effect, so a week is too short a time trail.'

'Correct, it will take anywhere up to six weeks to reach the full effect, lithium can take longer. But I don't see you agreeing to take it for six weeks, somehow. You should be getting some effect after a week, however. Enough to convince you that taking medication is the way forward.'

'Perhaps.'

'And in a week, the side-effects will have settled down a little. At least you'll have an idea of how you're going to feel on it.'

'Or I'll be so drugged that I won't be able to protest anymore.'

'Which is where the trust comes in,' Anna said levelly, determined not to let him rattle her. She held out the tablet, and reluctantly he took it from her, put it in his mouth, swallowed it.

'Do you want to check?' he asked.

'No,' she told him with a smile. 'The look of resignation on your face says it all. Now how about that shower, or are you going to argue about that too?'
Knocking on the outer door as arranged an hour later, John was met by Chloe.

'Reinforcements, excellent,' she said. 'Even Anna's finding him a challenge this morning.'

'Sherlock being difficult? Surely not,' John murmured as she let him into the inner room.

'Morning,' he said briskly, as he walked in and dragged a chair to the side of the bed. 'I hear that you're giving Anna a hard time.'

Sherlock narrowed his eyes at him. He looked better, John thought; better than he had since he'd arrived here. Hair still damp from the shower, he was sitting up in bed, arms folded, obviously interrupted mid-argument.

'What on earth gives you that impression?' he asked mildly.

'Your body language, plus the fact that when I saw Anna a little over an hour ago, she looked cool, calm and collected. Now she looks - no disrespect Anna - but slightly frayed round the edges. What are you arguing about at the moment?'

'Well, we've argued our way through Sherlock taking his medication, argued him into and out of the shower, and now we're discussing breakfast,' Anna said, with a small smile at John, obviously glad for the back-up, as Chloe had implied.

'No, you're discussing breakfast,' Sherlock said, 'I'm telling you that I'm not hungry.'

'And as I've already said, your brain may be telling you that you're not hungry, but your body is starving. You're just choosing not to listen to it,' Anna said calmly.

'When did you last eat?' John asked. 'The day before your admission? And not much then from what I remember. That's over a week, Sherlock. That breaks even Mycroft's six day rule.'

'Strange how you don't feel like eating when you're sedated and sleeping for twenty three hours a day,' Sherlock said, with an edge of sarcasm.

'Oh stop it, John said bluntly, 'Get him some breakfast Anna. Porridge or scrambled eggs are usually the easiest to get him to eat. I'll get it into him somehow even if I have to hold his nose to do it.'

'I'd like to see you try,' Sherlock muttered, but he didn't protest any further, as Anna went to organise the food.

When it arrived, however, he sat there and glared at the tray as if it contained some malevolent slime, rather than the rather appealing separate dishes of porridge, scrambled eggs and toast that wouldn't have looked out of place in the dining room at a five star hotel.

'Orange juice?' John asked him, handing him the plastic tumbler.

'Why is it always plastic?' Sherlock grumbled. 'I hate plastic glasses.'

'I'm presuming that's a rhetorical question,' John said, 'I suppose you're going to bemoan the lack of steak knives and cut throat razors in here too?'

'Proper razors are definitely lacking,' Sherlock said conversationally, taking the orange juice from
John's hand and pointedly putting it back down next to the tray on the table placed over his bed. 'Electric razors, John. When was the last time that you were asked to use one of those?'

'If you wanted to be allowed to use a proper razor, then you shouldn't have threatened to throw yourself off a tall building - again,' John retorted, and Anna found herself freezing slightly, waiting to see if this would precipitate an explosion from Sherlock. It was the sort of inadvertent comment from friends or relatives that she had learned early on in her training could provoke the most extreme of reactions, but Sherlock simply replied calmly, 'The first time was an optical illusion, a necessary one, as you were well aware.'

'Looked real to me at the time,' John told him.

'And it was meant to - to you, and to the other observers, but you knew, John. I'd left you enough clues for even you to be able to work it out.'

'And the second time?' John asked quietly.

That one hit home. Sherlock swallowed hard, closed his eyes and turned his head away.

'I'm not trying to make you feel guilty, Sherlock,' John told him, 'I'm just pointing out that there's a reason that you're here, and why the cups and the cutlery are plastic, and that you're not allowed a razor or even an electric toothbrush.'

'How do you know about that? Sherlock asked, eyes open again, interested despite himself.

'I've been reading the clinic safety protocols - and your notes,' John said. 'Spike on the end if you take the toothbrush head off, apparently. Some of the previous risk reports make eye-watering reading - literally.'

'Did you discover anything useful?' Sherlock asked, and Anna could see the almost physical wrench that it took to pull him out of the spiral that his mind was trying to take him down and back to the present. Clever John, she thought. He may have overstepped the mark in her opinion by bringing up the night on the roof, but he had managed to bring it up, make it clear that it wasn't an issue for him, and then twist the conversation onto something else entirely.

'That practices at Elmhurst were barbaric - that was from the GMC reports that Mycroft has provided though, and that a lot of people were trying to cover their tracks,' John said, then paused before asking, 'Sherlock, are you sure that you don't mind me looking into this?'

'Of course not. You know my methods, John. Short of doing it myself, which isn't an option, I can't think of anyone better suited to the task.'

'And talking to Mycroft, possible also to other people from your childhood - teachers, people who were employed at your house. The idea of me doing that doesn't bother you?'

'Why should it?' Sherlock asked.

'It just feels - intrusive somehow,' John said, then in a different tone, 'And are you actually going to eat any of that, or am I going to have to play aeroplanes with the spoon to get it into you?'

Sherlock sighed, picked up the spoon, and grudgingly began to eat the porridge.

John watched him eat - one spoonful, then a second, and Anna watched amused at the silent conversation between them. The implication was clear; John wasn't going to continue the conversation further until Sherlock ate.
'I wish that you'd stop treating me like a child,' Sherlock grumbled.

'I'll stop treating you like a child when you stop behaving like one,' John told him in his calm and unruffled way, and Anna had to restrain a smile. He was quite something, this John Watson. She suspected that he was an excellent doctor, and she could imagine what he had been like in the Royal Army Medical Corps; calm, decisive, authoritative when he had to be, supportive when he needed to be. And the way that he dealt with Sherlock was nothing short of miraculous. That Sherlock trusted him was obvious; that he understood Sherlock inside out and upside down was also obvious, and yet his relationship with John was entirely different to his relationship with Kate. Kate supported Sherlock. She gave him love, affection, understanding, whatever he needed. What she did not give him was boundaries; these it seemed were provided by John.

Anna remembered back to her conversation with Ed Harris about Mycroft parenting Sherlock, and wondered if in his own way, John Watson didn't do exactly the same thing.

'If you don't want the orange juice, how about something else to drink?' she asked quietly, when it became obvious that neither man was going to talk until at least some of the food had disappeared.

'Water's fine,' he muttered.

'Water doesn't have any calories in it,' she told him. 'Milk?'

The look he gave her said it all. 'Tea, if I must,' he said levelly.

'Fine,' she said calmly, 'John?'

'Why not,' John said, with a smile. Chloe, sitting at the desk, nodded silently, and left the room to put in the order.

'So you'll do it?' Sherlock was asking, 'You'll talk to Mycroft about Elmhurst.'

'If that's what you want,' John said, 'Do you - how about we talk to him together.'

Sherlock's response was to press the plastic spoon into his porridge bowl so hard that it snapped, leaving pieces of plastic all over the surface of the porridge. He continued staring at the surface of it until Anna took it away.

'Nobody is asking you to do anything that you don't want to do,' she said, but he remained silent. He changes so fast, she thought, interested. Rational one moment, out of control and unable to communicate the next.

It was John, yet again, who managed to get through to him. He allowed him a moment's silence, then said quietly, 'No Mycroft, then, or at least no conversation with him about Elmhurst. That's fine, I'll phone him later and see if he'll meet me to talk.'

Sherlock stayed silent for a long time, ignoring his tea, ignoring the rest of his breakfast. John seemed unperturbed by this, sitting next to him, sipping his tea, making occasional attempts at conversation, which Sherlock ignored, lost in his own thoughts.

After a good ten minutes, Anna realised that Sherlock's eyes were closed and he was asleep.

'Well that's one way to avoid a conversation that you're uncomfortable with,' John murmured quietly, then as he stood up and stretched. 'Sorry, Anna, I'm not sure that I helped with the food situation today.'
'You got some food into him, which is more than I've achieved so far,' Anna said, as they walked back towards the desk, and out of earshot, just in case. 'He's so - changeable. One moment logical and rational, the next moment lost in the despair and the voices. Was he like this before?'

'Yes,' John nodded, 'I suppose that I'm used to it. And even when he's well - the tuning out is something that he just does, maybe for the same reasons. I never thought of it like that.'

'Walls within walls,' Anna said quietly, 'Ed Harris mentioned that.'

'You thought that I overstepped the mark,' John remarked.

'That's the second time in as many days that I've been surprised at how people handle Sherlock,' Anna said, with a small frown. 'First Ed Harris yesterday, and now you. He doesn't seem to be a man with whom the traditional rules of handling patients apply.'

John shook his head ruefully, 'You'll discover that few traditional rules apply to Sherlock,' he said. 'He can't bear being treated like a child, or when people don't say what they mean. He finds it intensely frustrating, even when he's like this; especially when he's like this, because he doesn't have the intellectual capacity at the moment to work out what it all means, and it sets his mind racing in all kind of directions that he can't cope with.'

'So I'm better to be blunt with him?'

'You're better to say what you think, yes. Be gentle with him by all means, he seems to respond to that, but call a spade a spade, and he'll thank you for it.'

'I'll bear that in mind,' Anna said thoughtfully.

'He does trust you, you know,' John said suddenly. 'There are very few people that he trusts, but once he's decided that you're on his side, then that's it. He doesn't change his mind easily.'

'He hid his lithium this morning,' Anna said. 'That didn't feel like trust to me.'

'Did he take the rest of his tablets?' John asked.

'Yes - he just hid that one.'

'Then I'd see that as quite an achievement,' John told her. 'He even hid tablets from me and Kate, remember?'

'Control?' Anna asked.

'Pig-headedness,' John said with a smile. 'Even like this you can't stop him being stubborn, or wanting to get the upper hand,' then more quietly, 'It's tough though, seeing him like this. There are times when he's like the old Sherlock, and then, as you say, he's just lost in it again.'

'It's early days,' Anna said. 'He'll get there, it's just going to take time.'

'Just do me a favour,' John said. 'Don't say that to him. Patience isn't his strong point. He was frustrated enough at the thought of not being able to work for weeks, but now - '

Anna frowned slightly, 'He can't see a way forward at all now, John,' she said, 'I thought that you realised that. That's why he doesn't want to do anything other than lie in that bed and sleep. Eating, drinking, washing, taking medication; none of that makes any sense to him. That's why he's arguing against it so hard.'
'Hopelessness. The psychiatrist's biggest enemy.'

'Is that what you were trying to do?' Anna asked. 'Provoke a reaction?'

'In a way, yes, I suppose so. This interest in his past, it's the first time since he's been here that I've seen him that animated about anything. So I'm hoping to kill two birds with one stone, perhaps. Gather the information that helps Ed Harris to come to terms with his past, while at the same time getting Sherlock interested in the investigation. If anything can pull him out of this, a good juicy case can; even if it's his own.'

'You're a good friend to him, John,' Anna said.

'He gave me a reason to keep going when I needed one,' John told her seriously. 'I'm just returning the favour.' And then without explaining himself further, he smiled at Anna, and returned to his files and his investigation.
Interviews with Mycroft Holmes were never John's favourite activity. But since Mycroft had shown remarkable self-restraint in staying away from Sherlock since his admission at the clinic, he could hardly refuse his request for an update on Sherlock's condition. Especially when it fitted in so well with his own need for information from Mycroft.

And so after a full and exhausting day of working his way through files of information at the clinic, he found himself begrudgingly appreciating the luxury of Mycroft's limousine, which met him at the gates of the clinic, to take him to his meeting with Mycroft at the Diogenes club.

The place always made John feel uncomfortable. He liked to think that his time as an officer in the army had removed the working class chip from his shoulder, but still, the club made him acutely aware that being a grammar school boy didn't give you any kind of old school tie that would be respected in this place.

'Have a seat, John,' Mycroft Holmes said from behind his newspaper, without looking up, as John walked into the library that seemed to function as Mycroft's private meeting room.

With a sigh, John came and sat in the Chesterfield armchair opposite Mycroft, and poured himself a cup of tea from the pot silently, while Mycroft finally folded up his newspaper and watched him.

'So how is he?' Mycroft asked.

'Since you've been phoning Ed Harris for daily updates, I would think that you could tell me that.'

'I'm asking for your opinion.'

'As his doctor or as his friend?'

'Both.'

John sighed again, 'Better than he was, I suppose. That's the best that you can say, but he's got a long way to go.'

'And he's fighting it every step of the way?' Mycroft asked.

'The majority of the time, yes. How did you know?'

'Because he's always like this,' Mycroft said. Then at John's surprised look. 'I've been through this before, John, you forget. Not just while he was at Elmhurst; but time and time again when he was a student and at regular intervals since. In fact the five years since he's known you have been his best time yet. He's dealt with it himself, at least.'

'And before that he'd come to you for help?' John spoke slowly, uncertainly; unable to contemplate Sherlock asking Mycroft for anything, even when he had been younger.

'He rarely asked,' Mycroft said, temping his fingers in an unconscious imitation of his brother. 'But he found his own ways of letting me know that he needed help.'

'And did he accept it then?' John asked intrigued.

'Help? Not exactly. Not psychiatric help, certainly, not in the traditional sense of the word, but he would accept a place where he felt safe, where he could metaphorically shut down for a few days or
weeks unable he was better able to cope with it.'

'When you say not in the traditional sense..,' John asked slowly, intrigued at Mycroft's willingness to give him this information.

'I mean that he would not talk to any of the psychiatrists or psychologists I tried to bring in to talk to him. He would, however, occasionally talk to James Harrison, his old psychiatrist from Elmhurst on the telephone, and he would take medication in the short term as suggested by him. Once the episode was over, he would return to his old life and refuse to speak of it.'

'Sounds like Sherlock,' John said with a nod. 'Why did you never tell me, Mycroft? You warned me about his episodes. You told me to make sure that he was up by day three, and to make sure that he started eating by day six. Why did you never tell me what was really going on?'

'You're an intelligent man, John, and a doctor. I assumed that you would work it out.'

'Perhaps I didn't want to,' John said contemplatively.

'And so,' Mycroft said, 'Sherlock is safe, but remains unstable. He doesn't eat, he takes medication only intermittently, and I am told that if this continues a section may be the only way to treat him.'

'We're trying to avoid that,' John said quickly.

'Don't let your emotions cloud your judgement, John,' Mycroft retorted. 'You need to stay focused, we all do. Just because he has intervals when he sounds like Sherlock and acts like Sherlock doesn't mean that he is in control of his faculties.'

'He isn't,' John replied, 'not for the majority of the time anyway, but he's still in there, Mycroft. I'm just trying to help him to hold onto that.'

'And you think that knowing more about Elmhurst, and about his past will help with that?'

'It's a puzzle that has to be unravelled for him to get well, I think.'

'And if I asked you to let sleeping dogs lie, would you?'

'No,' John said quickly, 'I wouldn't. He needs this Mycroft, it's been eating away at him for the best part of twenty years. He needs to know the truth.'

'Even if it could destroy him?'

'Is that likely?'

'It is possible. It nearly destroyed him before.'

'So you won't tell me?'

'Not without checking with Sherlock first, no.'

'He doesn't want to see you, Mycroft, I'm sorry.'

'It's not a request, John. I need to see him for myself, to make sure that he knows what he's asking. After that if he agrees, I will tell you what I know, but only at the clinic, and all notes must remain there under lock and key.'

'I'll talk to Ed Harris,' John said, 'See what he says about you seeing Sherlock.'
'Do,' Mycroft said, picking up his newspaper again, to indicate that the interview was at an end, as a silent servant opened the door to escort John out.
Chapter 19

Sherlock was surprisingly calm about the prospect of seeing Mycroft, when John proposed it the next day, and so only a few short hours later, Anna found herself opening the door to the immaculately dressed figure of Mycroft Holmes, accompanied by a distinctly worried looking John Watson.

Walking into the room, they found Sherlock lying in bed, staring out of the window, as he had done for hours since his admission. Churning over events, trying to link together threads, John knew. It was his equivalent of lying on the sofa in Baker Street, hands templed under his chin. And yet here, John also knew, Sherlock's mind was turning painfully slowly, and much of the time he was listening to his voices, he was sure, rather than trying to piece together the past and find a way forward.

Anna had spent hours trying to persuade him to verbalise his thoughts rather than remaining locked in his own head, but with little success so far. If anything, he seemed to be becoming quieter. Even John and Kate were struggling to maintain a conversation with him; although watching Kate and Sherlock together, Anna sometimes thought that they had little need for words. Whole conversations could pass between them in looks and silence, and Sherlock seemed to draw comfort from her presence, even if Kate did look noticeably drawn by the end of an hour or so in his company.

Mycroft Holmes remained silent as he stood by his brother's bed, looking down at the still figure, waiting no doubt for Sherlock to choose to acknowledge his presence. John sighed, wondering when he would finally be be able to stop having to arbitrate between the two brothers, and quietly said, 'Sherlock, Mycroft's here.'

'So he is,' Sherlock said, looking slightly dazed from the medication as he rolled over to look at his brother. Without being asked, Anna quietly moved across to elevate the head of the bed to a sitting position. If a power struggle was on the cards, then Sherlock might as well be at eye level with his brother.

Mycroft sat down in the chair beside the bed and contemplated his younger sibling. 'You look better,' he said, without any other attempt at pleasantries.

'Better than when?' Sherlock asked frowning, trying to remember when he had last seen Mycroft. His mind was moving so painfully slowly on the medication, it was hard to remember. There had been that chance meeting with Mycroft outside Baker Street, after an early trip with Kate to the park. Had he seen him since? He thought not. He had been avoiding Mycroft whenever possible, knowing that Mycroft would work out the true nature of his illness if he spent any time in his company.

'Better than that night on the roof,' came the reply.

Sherlock shook his head, too tired to conceal his surprise. 'You were there?' he asked. 'I don't remember.'

Mycroft sighed. 'How do you think that Kate and John found you Sherlock, if not with my help?'

Sherlock closed his eyes for a second, painful memories flooding in. 'It's not something that we've discussed,' he said finally.

'The perhaps now is not the time to start,' Mycroft said, and there was a sadness in his voice that made Sherlock look at him sharply.

'I have been - concerned,' Mycroft said.
'Concerned? Why?' Sherlock asked. 'I would have thought that I was exactly where you wanted me to be. Safely locked up in here and finally complying with the medication that you have spent the last eighteen years trying to persuade me to take. I would imagine that you should feel reassured by my presence here.'

That anger again, Anna noted, she must ask John about that. It seemed to come so quickly, rising almost beyond his control, and yet he always seemed to manage to rein it in at the last moment.

'Enough, Sherlock,' Mycroft said firmly. 'I haven't come here for an argument. I am relieved to see you safe and looking better, certainly. You are obviously being well looked after here. Let us leave it at that, shall we?'

'So why have you come?' Sherlock asked. 'Other than the obvious reason?'

'John tells me that you wish me to tell him about Elmhurst and the events that led up to your admission,' Mycroft said.

'Correct,' Sherlock said briefly. He's struggling with this, Anna realised, watching the tension growing on his jaw, the hand twisting the sheet almost unconsciously. What was there between the Holmes brothers in the past that made Sherlock react like this? Mycroft Holmes had been nothing but reasonable in all of his conversations with Anna to date. A little abrasive certainly, a little searching in his questions, always trying to gain more information than he was entitled to, but never pushing too far when she explained the limits of what she could tell him. He had demonstrated concern towards Sherlock, but the need to control that John had warned her about had never been discernible. That Sherlock was safe, improving and receiving treatment seemed to be his only concern.

Mycroft had picked up on Sherlock's discomfort too. 'Always so defensive,' he murmured. 'What would you have me tell him?'

'All of it,' Sherlock snapped. 'Everything that you can remember about Elmhurst, about my time there, and anything else that John deems important. Tell him about what happened at home to lead to my admission. Tell him about our father, and about what he did. Tell him what sort of man he was, and let him draw his own conclusions.'

His words came out in a rush, and when he had finished talking, he closed his eyes, and rubbed the side of his head.

'I can't discuss this with you, Mycroft,' he said wearily, 'Not now, maybe not ever. I need to know, but I can't hear it from you.'

Anna caught John's eye as she moved round to the side of the bed. John looked concerned, she registered, at Sherlock's distress, and she knew that they were both thinking the same thing. If he reacted like this to even the idea of hearing about the past, how would he react to the information itself?

She placed a gentle hand on Sherlock's shoulder as he continued to rub his head as if he could rub out the memories. 'You okay?' she asked quietly. And then when he failed to respond. 'You don't have to do this now, Sherlock.'

'No, it's fine,' he said, opening his eyes to stare at his hands, pleating the sheets now, steadfastly avoiding eye contact. 'I need to do this now.'

'Sherlock -' Mycroft began, not hesitantly, because Mycroft never hesitated, but cautiously, and with an awareness that what he was about to say was unlikely to be received well.
'It's not complicated, Mycroft,' Sherlock said. 'Just tell John what you know, without filters, without consideration of the implications of what you're saying. You owe me that much at least, surely.'

'I - owe you?' Mycroft asked, with enough of a raise of one eyebrow to let John know which way this was going.

'Okay, enough,' John said from where he was standing in the corner of the room, by Anna's desk, and all three of them turned to look at him. 'Mycroft, with all due respect, I'm not sure that you're helping. You said that you wanted to hear from Sherlock himself that he wanted you to talk to him, well there you go. He's asked you himself, he's asked you not to hold anything back. Correct, Sherlock?'

'Correct,' Sherlock murmured. If this goes on, he's going to crack, Anna thought, one way or the other. Anger or withdrawal, it could go either way. Both ways would result in sedation, and were likely to set him back by several days. Both she would like to avoid if possible.

But she had reckoned without John Watson. Calm, practical, unruffleable John Watson, who was obviously more than capable of dealing with the Holmes brothers.

'So why don't we just agree that you will tell me what I need to know, without evasion, without filters, to help Sherlock. I will then take the information and tell Sherlock what he needs to know. I will tell him the truth about what happened with his father and at Elmhurst.'

'Have you forgotten so much?' Mycroft asked, as if he was struggling to accept the extent of Sherlock's memory loss.

'Sherlock's memory of Elmhurst and the events leading up to his admission are patchy at best,' Anna said quietly, when Sherlock remained silent. 'Over the years his attempts to interpret what happened to him there, and to suppress the memories have led to memory becoming tangled with interpretation, until he can no longer tell what is real, and what is overlay. Worse still his medical notes from that time are incomplete, and therefore of little help.'

Mycroft nodded. 'I will help if I can,' he said finally, after several minutes of consideration. 'But have you considered, Sherlock, that this might make things worse, not better. That some memories are best left undisturbed.'

Sherlock shook his head, mutely, still focused on the sheet. Withdrawal, then, Anna thought. Too tired for anger, too defeated.

'Psychotherapy is a way of working through that,' Anna told Mycroft. 'Suppressing memories is rarely an adaptive coping strategy, long-term. Sherlock needs to know what happened to him, however painful. It is better for him to deal with it now when he has the support here, and Ed Harris to work it through with, than to risk memories coming back at a later stage, when he doesn't have that support.'

'Then I will tell John what I know,' Mycroft said finally. 'If that is what you wish, Sherlock.' Sherlock nodded shortly, once, but remained silent.

John let out a long breath of relief, but Mycroft made no signs of moving, despite Sherlock's ongoing silence and obvious exhaustion.

'I am sorry, Sherlock,' Mycroft said finally, 'that you feel unable to hear this directly from me. My recall of events after eighteen years will be less than perfect, but I will tell you what I know. What I will not do,' he said with a sharp look at John, ' is to discuss anything other than hard facts. Agreed?'
'Of course,' John said when Sherlock failed to reply.

'Then I will be in touch,' Mycroft said, standing up and gathering up his coat. 'I'll see you back to the main entrance,' John said, as Anna moved to the door to let them out of the room, but not before Mycroft had shot one last glance at the huddled figure in the bed.

'I am truly sorry, Sherlock,' Mycroft said, pausing for a moment at the door. 'For my part in what happened. I should have done more to protect you.' John frowned slightly at this display of emotion? Surely not. Emotion from Mycroft Holmes twice in one day, now there was a rare sight.

'Another time,' Anna said quietly, when Sherlock remained motionless. 'He can't process this now, Mycroft, he's too locked into himself. Once he has all the information, once he's had time to talk it through and process it, then will be the time to discuss your part in it. Let him have the hard data, and the rest will come later.'

And with a curt nod to Anna, and a swirl of navy overcoat, Mycroft Holmes was gone.
'He's gone,' Anna said quietly to Sherlock, pulling up a chair to the side of the bed. 'Can you talk about it?'

Sherlock shook his head, remaining huddled and immobile.

'Does your brother always have this effect on you?' Anna asked.

'When I'm like this, yes.'

'In Elmhurst?'

'Yes, I think so.'

Anna nodded, thoughtfully, waiting to see if he would volunteer any more information.

'Do you need to sleep?' she asked finally.

'Sleep, or punch Mycroft,' he said after a delay, finally opening his eyes to look at her. 'And I'm sure that you'd rather I took the more adaptive option.'

No, I'd rather that you talked to me about it, Anna thought, as she rang the bell for Chloe, to bring more medication, choosing to ignore the slight shake to Sherlock's hands as he swallowed the tablets and settled down to sleep.

...

'I hope you know what you're letting yourself in for, John,' Mycroft had said to him as they walked through the long corridors.

John chuckled, despite everything. 'After five years you choose to ask me that now?' he said. Then, 'You forget, Mycroft, that I've known Sherlock for a long time, that I almost certainly know him better than you do by now, and more to the point that I'm a doctor, and that I've been a soldier. I've come across just about every atrocity that human beings can inflict on each other. I'm unlikely to be shocked, and I'm not here to judge. I just want to help Sherlock to get well; and if this is what it takes, then I trust that you'll believe me when I tell you that I just want to discover the truth.'

'Then I will have Anthea contact you to arrange a time tomorrow.'

'You're worried about him,' John said matter of factly.

'I've been worried about my brother for a long time, John,' Mycroft said with no hint of his earlier emotion. 'Am I more concerned about him at the moment than usual? Yes and no. He is safer here than he has been for a long time, of that I am aware. His capability for self-destruction remains, however, and that concerns me.'

'He can't hurt himself here, Mycroft,' John said with a frown, you know that.'

'Not physically, no,' Mycroft said, fixing John with the icy blue stare so reminiscent of Sherlock's. 'But his mind is perhaps at more risk at present. His capacity to destroy that remains.'

'Something happened, didn't it? In Elmhurst?' John said suddenly. 'Something not dissimilar to this.'
'Tomorrow, John,' Mycroft said, as they reached the main reception area, and he walked out of the doors, and into the waiting car without a backward glance.

...

'Asleep?' John asked Anna, when he returned to Sherlock's room.

'Best thing for him at the moment,' Anna said quietly. 'He's certainly not able to talk about it, and sleep is better than him lying there and trying to make sense of it all on his own.'

'What do you think happened to him in that place?' John asked quietly.

Anna shook her head, 'I don't like to think. Something that destroyed his ability to trust certainly; betrayal, probably. Physical pain seems likely given his reactions when he first got here, and the nightmares. Poorly thought out restraint and the ECT might be enough to explain it. I just hope that's all.'

'And his father - what happened before?'

'Enough to damage him, certainly. The exact nature and extent of the abuse, who knows? But one thing that you need to remember, John. It's not the degree or the type of the abuse that is important, it's the impact that it has on the individual. One child can be more damaged by regular minor abuse with no support network, than another will be by abuse which on paper appears much more damaging, if it is dealt with well, and they have a supportive adult to depend on through it or after it.'

'So it's interpretation of it that matters.' John said thoughtfully.

'In a way. What I'm saying is that you need to try not to pre-empt whatever it is that Mycroft has to say. The damage done to Sherlock is the damage done. The origin of it is important, certainly, for his own ability to come to terms with it, but in a way the exact details are irrelevant to where we are now.'

'It's a shame that Mycroft won't let you be there too,' John said.

'I'm scheduled a day off tomorrow,' Anna said with a smile, 'so it's just as well.' She looked tired, John recognised. It had, after all been nearly two weeks since Sherlock's admission to the clinic, and Anna had been there every day. Long enough without a break.

'Chloe being left in charge?' John asked.

'She's up to the task,' Anna said. 'She's tougher than she looks, and besides you learn early on in this job when its time to step away. If Sherlock struggles without me there, then we'll just keep him sedated, but I won't be doing him any favours if I try to keep working without a break. It's just one day, he'll cope.'

'I'll be here, anyway,' John said. 'Talking to Mycroft, at least I hope I will. Tell Chloe to give me a shout if she needs back-up.'

Anna nodded in acknowledgment. 'Something else to consider, John,' she said slowly. 'I know what you think of Mycroft, but he's not a machine. He proved that today. I think that this is harder for him that he's letting on. There's guilt there, certainly. He feels that he let Sherlock down in some way, I'm sure. When all is said and done, Sherlock is still his little brother. If he didn't feel guilt at his inability to protect him, then he wouldn't be human. Just consider that when you're talking to him, will you?'

John shook his head slightly. 'Mycroft is a hard, hard man, Anna. Emotion is rarely an issue for him.'
'All the more reason to be aware then,' Anna said with a smile.
Chapter 21

The lights were bright, so bright that he couldn't open his eyes against them. He tried to put his hand in front of his eyes to shield them from the brightness that burnt even through his eyelids, as he was wheeled down a long corridor, but his wrists were somehow secured to the sides of the trolley. His feet too were immovable. Frustrated he twisted against the restriction, but achieved only the bite of the restraints into his already tender skin. He tried to sit up, but a hand on his shoulder kept him lying flat on the trolley.

Then the trolley stopped, and there were voices, too many voices. Senses heightened, everything seemed so loud, and still too bright to open his eyes against, as the restraints were removed. He remained still for a moment, before struggling to push himself upright again, to take this opportunity for freedom; but there were hands, holding wrists and ankles, sliding him across to another, harder surface, securing more restraints around his protesting limbs, even as he screamed in frustration and writhed to avoid them. There were raised voices, telling him to stay still, and then amid it all, one voice softer than the rest, stroking his hair, telling him to lie still. A woman's voice, telling him not to be afraid, that she would stay with him. He wanted to ask her to help him, to explain that he shouldn't be there, but the words wouldn't come.

As he struggled to force his mouth to form the words, a mask came down over his face. He tried to push it away, forgetting that his hands were still secured. He twisted his head to try to avoid the mask, but it was held fast. He gagged and choked against the sweet-smelling gas that filled his nose and mouth. It felt as if he was suffocating, but everything was fading away. He twisted harder against the restraints in a last moment of desperation, and forcing his eyes open, found himself waking to an unfamiliar room in a tangle of sheets, sweating and shouting, t-shirt stuck to his back, bewildered and disorientated.

His breath was coming in fast gasps. Where was he? He couldn't remember. His heart was pounding, his head spinning. He was sitting up on the edge of a bed in a tangle of sheets and blankets. He raised a shaking hand to his head, now thankfully unrestrained, as a nurse came over from a desk in the corner of the room. He recognised her, he knew her. He trusted her - at least he thought that he did.

The nurse smiled at him, and laid a gentle hand on his shoulder. Surprisingly, he found that he didn't mind. 'Same dream?' she asked.

He looked up at her, blinking to focus. A dream, yes of course. That was all that it had been, but it had felt so real.

'Sherlock, you're safe, here,' she said gently, watching his face, picking up on his confusion. 'Do you remember where you are?'

He opened his mouth to say, 'Elmhurst', and then realised that it wasn't. He shook his head, rubbing his forehead as he did so, trying to clear the fog from his brain, but still, he couldn't think clearly.

'You're in the Northwood Clinic. This isn't Elmhurst. You're safe here.'

He nodded, and stared at the nurse for a long moment, trying to remember her name. 'Chloe,' he said finally. 'You're Chloe.'

She nodded. 'That's right, good. Now how about coming and sitting in the chair so we can sort out that mess of a bed? Can you stand?'
He wanted to say that of course he could stand, but his legs were shaking and he was grateful for
Chloe's supporting hand on his elbow as he sank down into the chair beside the bed.

'It must have been some dream,' Chloe said, squatting down in front of him. Another nurse had
appeared, as if by magic, and was rapidly stripping the bed and restoring it to order.

He rubbed the back of his neck and his hand came away wet. He looked at it in surprise. 'How about
we get you out of that damp t-shirt?' Chloe was asking. He nodded and pulled it over his head,
shivering slightly, and pulling on the dry one that Chloe handed him. 'I was tied down,' he said, still
feeling dazed. 'On a trolley, they wouldn't let me up.'

'That would explain the battle with the sheets,' Chloe said gently. 'Did that happen in Elmhurst do
you know? Did they use restraints on you - tie you down? It sounds like it could be a memory, a
flashback of sorts perhaps, provoked by your brother's visit yesterday.'

Mycroft had been here, of course. And he had asked him to tell John about Elmhurst and what had
happened there. How could he have forgotten.

'Perhaps,' he said in answer to Chloe's question. 'In the dream, I was on a trolley, they were moving
me somewhere. There was a room with another trolley in it. People were holding me down, there
were more restraints, then a rubber mask, and then everything started to fade away.' His voice
cracked slightly as he talked, still caught up in the horror of the dream.

'For ECT I presume,' Chloe said, and in her face was sadness and regret. 'It sounds like it might well
be a memory. Have you dreamt of that before?'

'Not like that,' Sherlock said, still shaken by the dream. 'It was so real. I've dreamt of being held
down before, of the table and the mask, but never like that.'

He was talking, Chloe realised, really talking, more than he had in days. She had been slightly
averse to the idea of managing Sherlock today without Anna's calm presence. She had seen a
first hand how challenging he could be at times, how defensive and argumentative. But this was
different. He seemed vulnerable today, stripped back perhaps to his sixteen year old self by the
dream. Calmer too, now that the nightmare was leaving him, and more accepting of where he was
and why.

'We can find out what the practices were at Elmhurst, if you want,' Chloe said, determined to keep
him talking. If restraint was commonly used, what their protocol for ECT was. Ed Harris is coming
to see you this morning. He might know too.'

Sherlock nodded. It was easier today, he realised. The voices were quieter, whispering intermittently
on the peripheries, but easier to ignore, and now that the horror of the nightmare had faded, he felt
calmer than he had for days. Even the darkness felt more distant, easier to ignore, to push away. It
was easier to be here, to allow himself to be looked after than he could possibly have imagined.
Easier than trying to work this out on his own to talk to Chloe and to quietly take his medication,
make his way slightly shakily to the bathroom for a shower, eat breakfast even. Easier to just go with
it than to keep fighting.

'You look better,' Ed Harris observed when he came to see him later that morning. 'Medication
kicking in do you think?'

'Perhaps. I certainly feel more - detached,' Sherlock said, frowning slightly. 'Compliant. I suspect
that's what Chloe would tell you.'
Chloe smiled at him, failing to rise to the bait. 'Calmer, I would say,' she said. 'And more able to accept help.'

'Tell me about the dream that you had,' Ed Harris was saying, and Sherlock did. And after his days of near silence, of feeling blocked in his ability to access anything, memories were slowly starting to come back. Snatches, disjointed bits and pieces of what had happened to him at Elmhurst with no coherent theme, other than fear and paranoia, and the sensation that all was not as it had seemed.

'How much do you want to know?' Ed Harris was asking.

Sherlock looked at him, not even attempting to hide the confusion on his face. 'I have to know,' he said, as if it was the most obvious thing in the world.

'Can you tell me why?'

'Because its my past,' Sherlock said. 'Because its important.'

'I'm not arguing with that, Sherlock. I think that you need to know too, but I want to know if you realise why it's so important to you.'

Sherlock considered for a long moment, eyes closed. 'Paranoia is only paranoia if it is untrue,' he said eventually 'I need to untangle it, and I need to know how much my father was behind what happened to me. Directly or indirectly. Because I need to know what extent he was prepared to go to in order to keep me there, and why.'

'We've talked little about your father recently.'

Sherlock shook his head. 'Too painful,' he said briefly.

'Are you ready to face it now.'

'No,' Sherlock said, fixing Ed Harris in his ice blue gaze. 'I don't think that I'll ever be ready, but I'm aware that it's unavoidable.'

'Which is progress,' Ed Harris said nodding slightly. 'Where does that pain come from, do you think? Why is this so difficult for you?'

The answer that came from Sherlock's mouth was somehow not the one formulated by his brain. 'It's the genetics of the thing,' he said. 'That's what bothers me most. Not the memory of past pain, both physical and emotional, but the idea that the man who could do these things, this monster, is part of my biological construction. It's an unavoidable conclusion that whatever evil was within him must also, to some extent, resides in me.'

He blinked, unsure where this strange observation had come from. It was emotional, it was less than logical. It was a thought that had somehow come from his deeper consciousness straight out of his mouth without touching through any filter of logic and reason.

'Do you worry about history repeating itself?'

Sherlock opened his mouth to deny it, and then realised that to some extent it was true. Before Kate he could never have imagined having children, bringing more beings into this complicated and imperfect world, but now, although they had never discussed it, he found himself looking at small children trustingly holding their parents' hands, and wondering, just wondering, how it would feel to love that much, to be loved that much, to be so entirely responsible for another life. After Kate's experience with David, he had never broached the subject with her. It was still too early for them to
consider it, but still. He watched parents' endless patience with their children and wondered if he would have that, or if anger would overtake him as it had his father.

'I'll take that as a yes,' Ed Harris said, watching his face. 'So what needs untangling here is not just the facts behind what happened to you, but also your father's motivators for what he did.'

'Anger, I would imagine,' Sherlock said quietly.

'Do you remember that?'

'Always,' Sherlock murmured. 'It always came from anger, and the anger came from hate.'

'Do you believe that your father hated you.'

'Of course.'

'It is unusual for a parent to hate their child.'

'And yet I somehow made it so easy for him.'

'Have you considered explanations for that?'

'I've done little else for the last few days.'

'And have you come to any conclusions?'

'There are two main options as I see it. Either he saw traits in me that he found intolerable, or more interestingly he doubted my paternity, and his hatred led from the belief that I was not his child.'

So coldly rational, Chloe noted, despite everything. Ed Harris was as unruffleable as always. 'Its an interesting theory,' he said calmly. 'Do you have any evidence for that?'

'Other than my mother's later infidelity, no. I'm sure that the thought must have occurred to my father, but it seems unlikely to be the explanation.'

'Because..'

'Because my father's estate was split between myself and Mycroft,' Sherlock said, his voice remaining level. Logic was always so much easier than talking about emotion. 'Had I not been his child, then given his level of disdain for me, I doubt that he would have left his will as it was. He would have had the means to obtain a DNA test had he felt it indicated, and I can think of no reason that he would have failed to act on the results.'

'Guilt?' Ed Harris suggested, impressed by how calmly Sherlock was taking this. 'Or the desire to avoid a scandal?'

'I think not.'

'Because?'

'Because that would imply that my father cared about the damage he did to me. He proved by placing me in Elmhurst that he did not. But more than that, much of his anger arose from the disgrace that he deemed that I was bringing to the family name. If I wasn't his child, then there would have been no disgrace. He would have welcomed the opportunity to proclaim me someone else's child, I think.'
'You've put some thought into this.'

'Of course.'

'Would you have found it easier if he was not genetically your father. Does some part of you want that to be true?'

Sherlock frowned again, and sighed, pleating the sheet in the way that he did when he found the topic of conversation uncomfortable. That was his tell, Chloe had noticed. That and rubbing the back of his neck. Every patient had them, subtle signs that they were trying to externalise their discomfort. 'It would make it easier than the truth,' he said quietly.

'Which is?'

'That my father hated me, and felt the need to punish me. That he somehow enjoyed my pain.'

'That is two different explanations for what happened. Do you believe that is true? That your father somehow took pleasure from inflicting pain on you?'

Sherlock shook his head. 'I don't know. I can't begin to guess at his motivations. I've spent hours trying to work it through, and what I can't get away from is the fact that he was a rational man. He rarely lost control - other than where I was concerned.

Ed Harris allowed him a moment, before asking quietly, 'You tell me that your perception was that your father hated you. Can you remember a time when that wasn't the case? When he showed you affection.'

Sherlock swallowed hard. 'No.'

'When you were a small child?'

'No. He found me an irritation I think; a little like an annoying terrier, or a lapdog. He found my mother's affection for me particularly irritating, although even that was very intermittent.'

'Was he jealous of her affection for you?'

'More of the attention that she gave me, I think.'

'Was your father violent towards your mother - or to Mycroft?'

'To Mycroft - not that I'm aware, or not to the same extent. I can remember him being caned on one occasion when I was small, and my mother comforting him afterwards. I can't even remember what he had done. But that was a punishment, not out of anger.'

'And with you? Was that from anger do you think?'

'Always,' Sherlock spoke quietly, reluctantly.

'Enough?' Ed Harris asked, picking up on his reaction.

'For now, yes,' Sherlock said, looking at him directly. 'I remember so little, it's frustrating. Fragments of memory, more visual than anything else.'

'It might help you to write them down. Could you try do you think? it might help John in his investigations, if nothing else.'
Sherlock shook his head. 'Too disjointed,' he said. 'I suspect it would only frustrate me further. Its more images than anything more concrete.'

'Could you draw them?'

Sherlock contemplated. 'Possibly, yes.'

'We have an art therapy department here,' Ed Harris was saying. 'I can send someone along with a sketchbook and pencils. It's time that we started looking at other therapy options anyway, now the medication is starting to kick in.'

Sherlock frowned. 'I'm too tired for an endless stream of therapy sessions,' he said quietly. Again, Chloe noticed, the fight in him had gone. He did just look exhausted.

'And I'm not proposing it,' Ed Harris told him. 'I agree. I think that what you need most is rest and a chance for the medication to reach its full effect. CBT would help I think at some point, but you are doing much of the work yourself in our sessions. Your depression has its source both in your childhood experiences, which we are trying to unravel, and in your bipolar disorder, which is a different entity, and can be treated with medication. Interestingly, you already employ CBT techniques in your own analysis of events. You are already able to come up with alternative explanations and to weigh up the evidence for and against.

'An art therapist could provide you with the tools and the skills to document your memories though, perhaps help you to unfurl them further though, and that, I think, is worth exploring if you feel able to do so.'

Sherlock shrugged. 'Anything that gets these pictures out of my head is worth a try.'

'Then I'll arrange it. You have done well today, Sherlock, to be able to talk about this. I am aware of how difficult it is for you.'

'It's easier in here,' Sherlock said quietly, still pleating the sheet. 'It feels - safer, somehow. I know that no matter how bad things get, I can't hurt anyone. I can't -'

'Hurt yourself?' Ed Harris asked quietly.

'You knew,' Sherlock said, looking at him intently. 'You knew how bad it was before. What I was afraid of doing, why there were things that I couldn't discuss.'

'I suspected that the risk was higher than you were letting on, certainly. I suspected that there were ideas and plans that you were keeping a tight rein on.'

'And yet you never said anything.'

'It was a risk, a calculated risk - one which nearly cost you your life, but what I did know was that unless I could get you to voice those concerns directly, then you were not sectionable and would not have agreed to an admission. You denied direct plans, time and time again. Without that direct declaration of what you were considering, my hands were tied.'

'I couldn't talk about it,' Sherlock said quietly.

'And now?'

'Now, I have nothing left to lose, I think.'
'Which is a form of acceptance in itself,' Ed Harris said gently. 'So, I would suggest that you try to sleep for a while, and we will continue this tomorrow. In the meantime, try not to think about this too much on your own. Talk to Chloe about it by all means, but churning things over and over in your head at this point will do you little good.'

'I'd rather sleep,' Sherlock said, as the darkness started to creep back in. And so he took the sedation Chloe gave him and slept, untroubled for once by nightmares or memories.
John, meanwhile, was possibly having an even more difficult morning than Sherlock. Mycroft Holmes had turned up punctually at 9.30, accompanied by Anthea. John had arranged for them to use a large interview room, with wide windows looking out onto the gardens, well positioned to catch the September sunshine. John had not been able to face the idea of spending several hours in the windowless cell of an office that Mycroft had arranged for him to use while he was investigating Sherlock's past history; Sherlock's case, if he could call it that. Who could have predicted this six months ago? John Watson investigating Sherlock Holmes, or his past at least. Another one to file away for later.

Mycroft looked slightly tense, as he swept into the room, took up a chair by the window, with his legs crossed, and laid out the ground rules for John in rapid staccato speech. Anthea, meanwhile, quietly arranged herself and her laptop at a table in the corner, out of the direct eye-line of either man. John wondered how many and what kind of other meetings she had been witness to during her time in Mycroft's employ, although this surely had to be one of the strangest.

'I am prepared to talk to you for Sherlock's benefit, not mine,' Mycroft told John. 'Just so that we are clear, Anthea will transcribe our conversation while we talk. I would prefer you not to make notes, but if you feel the need to write down further questions, or bullet points to ease the interview process, then that is acceptable. Anthea will then provide you with an encrypted version of the transcript, once I have checked for inaccuracies, and this can be attached to Sherlock's notes, but must not leave the clinic. I need hardly tell you how damaging this information could be, should it be accessible to the wrong people.'

The press would have a field day, John thought, remembering the events before that first day on Bart's roof and Sherlock's prolonged disappearance and presumed death. And after that, the accounts by old school friends, the relentless digging through Sherlock's past. No, he wouldn't risk that.

'I agree,' he nodded. 'The notes stay here, although I take it that you're happy to share with Kate what I learn?'

'Of course, and the staff here, but nobody else.'

'You have my word,' John murmured.

'One more thing,' Mycroft was saying crisply, 'I am not here to talk about my own psychological state, or my own interpretation of events. In short, I will not take kindly to any attempts at amateur psychoanalysis. I trust that I make myself clear.'

'I wouldn't dream of it,' John murmured.

'Good, then I think that we understand each other. So shall we begin?'

John had had a pre-prepared speech ready, acknowledging that this might be difficult for Mycroft, and offering him an opportunity to call a pause if he needed to. With Anna's warning in mind, he was very aware that this could not be easy for Mycroft either. They were both a little uncomfortable in their new roles. Neither Holmes brother enjoyed relinquishing control, but somehow he sensed that an acknowledgement of this was the last thing that Mycroft would want.

'Where do you want to start?' he asked.

'You're the interviewer, John. But I would suggest with Sherlock's admission to Elmhurst, and we
'Could we back it up just a little, do you think? Tell me about what Sherlock was like before Elmhurst, before he got ill. Was there any suggestion of mental illness? Depression, auditory hallucinations, anything?'

'Befo your mother's death, you mean? No, I would say not.' Mycroft sighed. 'He was never an easy child, John, as I'm sure that you can imagine. He was argumentative, difficult, he refused to bow to social conventions from a young age. My parents chose to keep him away from social events whenever possible. Sherlock could always be relied upon to cause maximum disruption at the most inappropriate moment in time. Later Asperger's was suggested as a possible diagnosis, although he has always resisted any attempt at formal testing, but at that time he was just thought to be a difficult child.'

'How did your parents react to his behaviour?'

'How would you expect them to react? My mother with her normal combination of bewilderment and denial, my father with anger and punishment. That was the pattern of Sherlock's childhood.'

Now they were getting somewhere. 'Disproportionate punishment?' John asked, anticipating the answer.

'Not in the beginning, no.' Mycroft said, steepling his hands in an unconscious imitation of his brother. 'You have to understand John that my father was an old-fashioned man, with old-fashioned values. He had himself had a very strict upbringing, and was no stranger to the concept of punishing children. He believed that lessons were best learnt with the cane, and with subsequent remorse and atonement. Sherlock would bow to none of these, however, and how often have you ever heard him express remorse at his actions or apologise? His punishments therefore rapidly became harsher than mine had ever been.'

'And later?' John asked.

'Later, Sherlock seemed to delight in provoking my father into anger. It became a game for him, almost, seeing how hard he could push him before he would crack. Don't misunderstand me, I am not trying to justify what happened. Sherlock was a child, my father should have exerted restraint, but equally Sherlock did little to avoid confrontation with him.'

'But why?' John frowned, 'Was it a bid for attention do you think? An attempt to prove that your father cared?'

'I have no idea,' Mycroft said, sounding distracted as he focused his gaze out of the window. 'And we are veering into the world of psychoanalysis, are we not? I told you that I would tell you the hard facts, John, not my interpretation of them.'

'Fine,' John said briskly. 'Were you subject to the same type and degree of punishment? Was it equitable, I mean.'

'I can certainly remembered being caned on occasion as a child, for minor misdemeanours, yes,' Mycroft said smoothly. 'Usually appropriately, I have to say. My father lost his temper with me on occasion, as with Sherlock, and on those occasions I would be taken into his study and punished. I would express regret and repentance, I would be sent to my room after punishment, generally with some restriction of privileges for a few days, then life would return to normal, and I would have learnt not to repeat my mistake.'
'And Sherlock failed to learn?'

'That was part of it, yes.'

'Was there a time at which you felt that it had got out of hand?' John asked. 'That it had crossed from punishment to something else?'

'Not for a long time,' Mycroft replied. 'You have to remember, John, that I was seven when Sherlock was born, and already away at preparatory school. He was cared for mainly by the nanny; a different nanny to the one that I had had before going away to school, so there was not even that bond there. At seven I was deemed old enough to take meals with my parents, and a small baby is of little interest to a seven year old boy. Many of the problems with Sherlock only began when he was sent to my old preparatory school when he himself turned seven; when he was expected to enter into the adult world, as I had. By that time that I was at public school, and my time at home was limited to those parts of the holiday when I was not away on school trips or visiting friends. I was aware of my father's anger towards Sherlock, certainly, but it was some years before I witnessed anything more concerning than that.'

'So you were unaware of the extent of it?'

'As I assume, was my mother,' Mycroft said. 'I first became aware of it when I returned home for the summer holidays at the end of my A-levels. I was eighteen, Sherlock must have been eleven. My mother was away in France, for a prolonged visit with relatives out there. Sherlock had begged to go with her, but had been refused on the basis of his frankly appalling school report, and was sulking. I came home to find Sherlock confined to his room even for meals, allowed out only to use the bathroom, with a black eye and in a foul temper. In the course of conversation with my father, he had apparently come to some interesting deductions about the state of my parents' relationship, and had directly accused my father of seeing another woman. That he knew enough of the facts of life to have come to that conclusion given his usual disinterest in the outside world is - intriguing. What is less surprising is that he did not have the good sense to keep his mouth shut about something that I had worked out years ago. Nonetheless, he deduced not only the presence of another woman in my father's life, but also her connection with my father, where and when they met, even what brand of perfume she wore, and which cigarettes she smoked. My father was - unimpressed to say the least.'

'Did Sherlock tell you what had happened?'

'Not at first, no. Initially he told me that my father had become angry, and that in trying to get away from him he had fallen and hit his face against the door knob. It took me two days to get him to tell me what had really happened, and for him to show me the extent of his injuries.'

'Did you confront your father about it?'

'Of course. My father was not an unreasonable man, John. He admitted that he had lost his temper with Sherlock and lashed out at him. He appeared - repentant. About hitting Sherlock that is, not about the affair obviously. That he chose not to discuss, and I chose not to reveal the extent of Sherlock's revelations to me. That was the nature of my relationship with my father. We both knew when silence was the best option.'

'He assured me that it would never happen again, but that nonetheless Sherlock had needed punishing, hence the confinement to his room, although I suspect that his desire to ensure that as few people as possibly saw his injuries had a role in this. I arranged to take Sherlock away for a few days to somewhere where his injuries would not be commented on, and by the time that we returned, all seemed back to normal. My mother returned a week later, Sherlock begged me not to tell her, and to my shame I complied, believing it to be an isolated incident.'
'Did your mother ever know?'

'I like to think not, that she knew about the more legitimate punishment only. She was aware of my father's outbursts of anger, certainly. On occasion these would be directed towards her, and that would often precipitate a trip to France. Once or twice I saw bruises - finger marks around her wrists or upper arms, grip marks where my father had grasped her too hard, raised voices from their bedroom. I chose to ignore them.'

Mycroft looked up at John, his face full of sadness and regret. 'I should have said something, John,' he said slowly. 'I ignored the signs because I was too much of a coward to do anything else.'

Then abruptly he stood up and said quietly to Anthea.

'Delete it.'

'Sir?'

'The transcript. Delete it, all of it.'

And with no further attempt at explanation, he walked out of the room, leaving John staring after him in confusion.

'Should I - go after him?'

'I wouldn't advise it,' Anthea said crisply.

They sat in silence for several minutes, John acutely aware of the ticking of the clock, before Anthea murmured something about coffee and slipped from the room.
Chapter 23

Slightly shaken by both the revelations of the morning and by Mycroft's reaction to it, John sat and filled his A4 pad with a combination of distracted doodles and pertinent questions, until Anthea returned. She placed a tray containing two cups of coffee on it on the table, and then in silence closed her laptop and placed it back in her case, snapping it shut.

'What are you doing?' John asked surprised.

'Obeying orders,' Anthea said, without a hint of emotion or reaction on her face. 'Goodbye, John,' and she was gone.

John heard a murmured conversation outside the room, and then Mycroft was walking back in. He silently handed John a cup of coffee from the tray, before picking up his own, and standing, one hand in his pocket, looking out of the window to drink it.

John waited patiently for him to speak, sensing that now would not be the time for a flippant comment about Anthea's disappearance.

'IT won't work, John,' Mycroft said finally.

'I'm sorry?' John replied. 'You've lost me, Mycroft.'

'This,' Mycroft said, waving his hand at Anthea's vacant seat. 'Transcripts, my attempt to keep our conversation to hard facts, without telling you all that you need to know. It won't help Sherlock.'

'What will help?' John asked.

'I need some advice, John,' Mycroft said, turning abruptly, settling his cup on the table, and pulling an envelope out of his briefcase, he handed it after a second's hesitation to John. 'What,' he said very slowly, 'do you think that I should do about this?'

John cautiously pulled several sheets of lined A4 paper out of the envelope. The paper was slightly yellowed with age, and the pencil writing on it had faded, making it difficult to read. Nonetheless, John recognised a scrawled and younger version of Sherlock's now precise writing. The first line read, 'Once upon a time there was a boy called Sherlock.'

'What is this?' he asked.

'It's Sherlock's account of his life before Elmhurst,' Mycroft said quietly. 'Written after the first block of ECT, when his memory was disturbed, but beginning to come back to him. It was this story that provoked my father to ask for the second round of ECT, which obliterated his memory almost entirely.'

'Does Sherlock know about this?'

Mycroft shook his head, silently, his usually expressionless face full of sorrow. 'Would you have shown it to him, John? Would you show it to him now?'

'Is it accurate,' John asked, stunned at the revelation that Mycroft had had Sherlock's past in an envelope for all of these years, and yet had never shown it to him. 'What he's written in here, is it what happened? You said that his memory was affected by the ECT.'
'It is painfully accurate, yes.'

'Then he needs to see it, surely?'

'Read it first, John, and then tell me if you would have shown it to him.'

John settled down to read, intensely aware to start with of Mycroft's stiff-back figure, staring out of the window. As he read on, he found himself forgetting about Mycroft's presence almost entirely. The story that he read was raw and detailed. In places, Sherlock's pencil had ripped the page in his impatience to document the past, and in others his writing was almost illegible. It was a story obviously written in haste, without Sherlock's characteristic attention to detail. There were grammatical errors and spelling mistakes which John knew would make his friend shudder now. It was a story that read as if it had been written at one sitting, late into the night, and it made John want to weep to imagine the depth of pain experienced by the sixteen year old boy sitting writing this alone in a psychiatric ward; deprived of his mother, deprived of his memories, believing that his father hated him, and with no hope left for the future.

Finishing the final page, he handed the bundle of papers back to Mycroft, carefully avoiding his enquiring gaze. 'I need some air,' he said, as he let himself out of the room.

Mycroft came to find him in the gardens, ten minutes later and silently offered him a packet of cigarettes, as he sat down on the bench beside him.

'I don't smoke,' John said.

'Nor do I,' Mycroft replied, pulling one from the packet and lighting it. John, feeling like a student all over again, did the same. He hadn't smoked for over fifteen years, but the pleasure was still the same. There was something infinitely satisfying in doing something which you knew was destructive, or perhaps the pleasure was just in the nicotine hit. Either way, it helped.

'It's horrible, Mycroft,' he said finally. 'All of it is horrible. Sherlock's perception of his relationship with your father, his recollection of the violence, the way that he wasn't believed, that he tried to tell his teacher at school and your father - did he really manufacture all of those statements from his employees, all of the evidence to make it look as if Sherlock was lying?'

'I knew little about it,' Mycroft said quietly, 'but I wouldn't put it past him. Certainly several members of staff left my father's employment shortly afterwards, which would fit. What Sherlock hasn't included, interestingly, presumably because he doesn't remember, was the time that he ran away, and tried to get to my mother in France.'

'Did he succeed?'

'He got as far as the ferry, but he had no passport, and was picked up by passport control at the far side. I was delegated to go and fetch him. I've never seen my father so angry. If he had reached my mother he would have been shocked, however, she was in what could euphemistically be called a 'Health Clinic,' over there, a place which she had been to numerous times before.' He met John's gaze, to ensure that he understood what he was saying.

'A psychiatric hospital,' John said flatly, 'Of course.'

'A very exclusive private clinic, with every alternative therapy and spa treatment laid on, but yes, effectively.'

'Did she have manic-depression too?' John asked.
'I never saw her medical records, but I very much suspect so. It was well hidden. She took medication for her 'nerves', her behaviour was erratic at best, and some of her more flamboyant outbursts would be rapidly followed by trips to France, always accompanied by the same 'friend,' who I very much suspect was employed by my father to ensure that she reached her destination safely.'

'Sherlock's descriptions of her mood swings, alternating between giving him almost overwhelming amounts of affection and then screaming at him to get out of her room, throwing ornaments at him, taking to her bed for days at a time with headaches, it all sounds very - well characteristic.' John said.

'And familiar,' Mycroft said quietly.

'Did he know? Did he ever know that she was ill?'

Mycroft shook his head, 'I don't think so,' he said. 'It was never discussed, but bipolar disorder does often run in families, or so I'm told.'

'You?' John asked quietly, wondering if he was going to be told to mind his own business, but to his relief Mycroft shook his head, 'No, I seem to have escaped it,' he said. 'Psychological evaluation for the role which I fulfill is - extensive, to say the least, as I'm sure that you can imagine. Adaptive coping mechanisms, seemed to be the conclusion, which may surprise you.'

'I thought that we weren't talking about you,' John said.

'The rules have changed, John, or haven't you noticed?' Mycroft said, grinding out his cigarette beneath the heel of his perfectly polished, hand-crafted shoes.
Chapter 24

Kate went to visit Sherlock that evening with some trepidation. She knew that the previous day had been tough for him, and the slow progress was beginning to get to her. 'I feel as if I'm on a rollercoaster,' she had admitted to Alice as they had lunch together at work that day. It seems that as soon as I think that he's finally getting better, then he goes back down again. It's just relentless.'

'Perhaps you need a break?' Alice suggested. 'A few days away maybe. Why don't you go and see your sister and the kids for the weekend? Get some perspective.'

Kate pulled a face. 'She'd have a field day, Alice, can you imagine? Kate's boyfriend is a psychiatric inpatient. Oh she'd pretend to be supportive, but inside she'd be rubbing her hands with glee at the thought that this one was possibly worse than David.'

'You don't mean that,' Alice said.

'No, I don't, but Beth would. She loves to see me fail, you know that.'

'She's just taken different life decisions to you, that's all.'

'Yes - smug ones,' Kate said.

'So don't tell her. Just go and stay, spent some time with Sophie and Caitlin, they'd love to see their Auntie Kate. Get a bit of distance.'

Kate shook her head, 'I couldn't leave Sherlock,' she said.

'Kate, he's being well looked after, you've said that. Besides he'd understand, why don't you talk to him about it?'

Kate's lips curled up into a smile, despite herself. 'He wouldn't understand at all, you know him well enough for that. But you're right in that he'd accept that he didn't understand and tell me to go anyway. Maybe next weekend, I'll see.'

But walking into Sherlock's room that evening she found him sitting up in bed, hunched over what looked like a sketchbook, pencil in hand. The television was on, switched to a news program that he wasn't watching. He looked up as she walked in and smiled at her.

'Hullo,' he said. He looked slightly dazed, she thought, as if he couldn't quite work out why she was there, but when she went to kiss him on the cheek, he turned his head the way that he always used to in public, so that her kiss landed on his lips, and he held her close for a moment, one hand buried in her hair as she sat on the bed next to him.

'Hello,' she said, as she finally pulled away. 'I thought that I must have come to the wrong room.'

He smiled at her again. 'No, the medication is kicking in, I think, that's all.'

'So - is it getting better?'

He ran a hand through his hair ruefully, the other hand holding tight to hers. 'Better than it was, certainly. Less painful and the voices have almost gone. I feel a bit dopy, I can't concentrate on anything for long, I feel - drugged for lack of a better description, but that's better than the
'I'm glad,' Kate said gently, reaching out to stroke his cheek. 'I've been worried about you.'

'I know,' that clear blue gaze caught hers and held it. 'Kate,' he hesitated slightly, 'I'm sorry, I'm just so, so sorry.'

'For what?' she asked.

'For that night on the roof, for what I put you through.' He spoke not so much with regret as with urgency, words tumbling over each other in his effort to get them out, before he had time to recall them.

'It wasn't your fault,' she told him, hand coming up to cup his cheek again. 'You were ill, you weren't in control.'

'Do you know what stopped me?' he asked, his eyes searching hers. 'You, your voice, telling me not to do it. That was all that I had to hang on to.'

She stared at him, trying to take in what he was saying. 'You could hear my voice?'

'Crazy, isn't it? Despite everything. Every other voice was telling me to do it, to get it over with, to jump, that you and John would be better off without me. And then there was your voice, so gentle, so calm, telling me that this wasn't the way, that you loved me, that I should hold on.'

'And that was enough?'

'It was enough to make me unsure. Enough to make me step away from the ledge and wait until I was sure. But you came first.'

She pulled him towards her and held him tight. 'I'm glad,' she murmured, 'I'm glad that I was enough.'

His arms tightened round her, and they stayed like that, tightly entwined for a long, long time. 'I should have told you that before,' he murmured into her shoulder.

'You're telling me now,' she said, brushing away a tear as he pulled away to look at her, then punched him lightly on the arm. 'You made me cry, you idiot, you know how much I hate crying.'

'I love you, Kate,' he said softly. 'I hope that you know that.'

'I do know that,' she said, with a little nod of her head. 'I thought that I'd lost you.'

'Never,' he said, as he pulled her close again, and suddenly Kate wasn't sure who was comforting who, but somehow it didn't matter. Sherlock was becoming Sherlock again, and he was here, and he was safe, and there was a chance, just a chance that one day life would get back to the wonderful, chaotic non-normality that their life at Baker Street had been before.
'You've been drawing,' Kate said, when Sherlock finally let her go.

'Ed Harris' idea,' he said with a nod. 'Since I can't write down my memories, he thought that this might help. Have a look if you want,' and he handed her the sketchbook.

She had known that he could draw; but before it had been confined to doodlings, the odd cartoon, mainly poking fun at John, and the occasional schematic sketch of a crime scene. These tended to look more like scientific diagrams than anything else, the clean lines of the objects in the room overlaid with arrows and scribbled comments, but these sketches were something else entirely. Detailed, intricate; as she turned the pages of the sketchbook she found page after page of the same two scenes. The first a hospital room, viewed from various angles. A bedside cabinet, a nurses desk in the corner, a window with a view of a massive tree, a beech from the shape of the leaves, and a heavy door, shut in all the sketches, with an observation hatch in it. Sherlock himself was conspicuously absent in all of these pictures, much to Kate's relief; but the second set of drawings were a birds eye view of a treatment room. His memory of this room was obviously hazy, with only the impression of doors and cupboards. A structure next to the bed looked to Kate like an anaesthetic machine, and she found herself unable to tear her eyes away from the huddled figure sketched in the briefest line in the bed, almost obscured by the lines of the sheet, just the head with its curly hair, recognisable.

'That's what I remember,' Sherlock said quietly, and she realised that he had been watching her face as she looked at the sketches.

'They're good,' she said, trying to pull herself together.

'They're imperfect,' he said impatiently. 'There's an art therapist here, I met her earlier. She's offered to try to help me to make them clearer.' Then after a slight pause, and with an edge of his old curiosity to his voice, 'And they upset you, why?'

This was more like the old Sherlock too. Analytical, detached, trying to dissect the reason behind emotion, but always feeling slightly out of kilter with them.

'It's this one,' Kate said, showing him the sketch of the treatment room. 'Thinking of you like that, so alone, so - defeated. It's just hard, that's all.'

'Then I suggest you leave the investigation of this to John,' Sherlock said, sounding oddly detached again.

Kate shook her head, 'No, I want to help,' she said, and then watching the hard line of his jaw, said softly, 'You don't have to protect me, you know Sherlock, I'm a big girl, I'd rather know the truth, help you find out the truth.'

He frowned, and looked down, pleating the sheet between his fingers in a way that had become almost a tic since his admission. 'John was here earlier,' he said quietly. 'He talked to Mycroft.'

'And?'

'And he asked if I wanted to know what he had found out as he uncovered the facts, or if I wanted to wait until he had a cohesive story.'

'What did you say?' Kate asked, knowing the answer before she had finished the question.
'I told him that I couldn't cope with a slow drip-feed of information, and I preferred to wait until he had finished his investigation,' Sherlock said, still looking at the sheet, then looking up, he fixed Kate in his piercing blue gaze. 'Does that make me a coward, Kate?' he asked, with uncharacteristic uncertainty.

'No,' she said, with a slight shake of her head, 'It makes you realistic about what you can and can't cope with at the moment.

'I wish,' he frowned. 'I wish for all the world that I didn't have to know, that I could just wipe the whole thing out, but...'

'But you can't,' she finished for him. 'You know that, you've spent nearly twenty years trying to block it out, to forget. It doesn't work, Sherlock, you need to know.'

'Is the past always this painful?' he asked, bluntly.

'Not always, no, but some parts of the past are.' She paused, 'What are you afraid of, do you know? What's the worst thing that could come out of this.'

He frowned, 'My father, Kate. Strangely enough, I don't want to discover that he was a monster. I want there to be a reason, an excuse for what he did. I want to find some evidence of humanity in him. I need to, I think.'

'Few people are truly evil,' Kate said quietly. 'There's always a reason.'

'I hope so. Kate can you do something for me?'

'Of course.'

'John is going to talk to James Harrison, in Edinburgh. Face to face interviews always work best, I've found. Will you go with him, see what you can discover?'

Kate shook her head in confusion, 'If you want me to, then of course I'll go, but why? John is more than capable of interviewing him on his own.'

'Because you see beyond the surface in a way that John can't always do. If he's lying, if there's something he's holding back on, you'll know.'

'Why would he lie?' Kate asked in confusion.

'I don't know,' Sherlock told her, 'all I know is that more went on at Elmhurst than anyone is prepared to admit.'

'When is he planning to go, do you know?'

'Soon. The end of the week I suspect.'

Sherlock closed his eyes for a moment, frowning. 'You okay?' Kate asked, and Chloe automatically looked up from her seat at the desk, from where she had been trying not to eavesdrop on their conversation.

'I'm fine,' he said automatically, and then remembering that this was Kate, sighed and said, 'It's just hard to focus on anything, that's all. Thinking, even talking, requires effort to get past the medication. I'm tired, I'm fighting the impulse to sleep - or to just lie here and contemplate the ceiling tiles.'

Kate smiled, despite everything. 'Impatient,' she teased gently, 'always so impatient.'
'I'm trying, Kate,' he said sadly. 'I'm trying to behave, to be patient. I know logically, that I can't fix myself, not this time.'

'But that doesn't stop you wanting to try,' Kate finished for him.

'Precisely,' he said, then after a pause. 'Was it like this for you?'

She frowned for a moment, trying to work out what he was asking, then realisation dawning said, 'When I was admitted to the clinic as a teenager, you mean?'

He nodded, eyes watching her face.

'Not really,' she said, after considering for a while. 'I wouldn't admit that there was anything wrong with me for a long time. It was everyone else's problem and not mine. My parents', mainly. Nobody could see what was obvious to me - that I needed to be thinner, stronger, better; that forcing me to eat, to get fat was the wrong thing to do, that I needed to be in control, and that by taking that away from me they were ruining everything.'

'I didn't believe that I was ill, either,' he said slowly, 'in Elmhurst, I mean, I remember that much. I was convinced that it was a conspiracy, cooked up by my father to silence me.'

'To silence you about what?'

'I have no idea,' he said quietly, 'but we were talking about your experience, not mine. What made you change your mind about your illness?'

'Seeing others, I think. Other anorexics. I could see that they looked dreadful, and yet I still envied their thinness, it became like a competition. And then one day I caught sight of a reflection in the window. I thought it was a new admission; her hair was thin, her cheeks hollowed out, her clothes hanging off her. She looked thinner than any of us - she looked dreadful, and then I realised that it was me.' Kate stopped abruptly, surprised at how raw the memory still was. She never talked about this, she tried not to think about it, and yet if it would help Sherlock she was more than prepared to delve into her own subconscious for answers.

Sherlock was watching her reaction she realised - without sympathy, without emotion, waiting to see what she would say next.

'What did you do?' he asked.

'I went to my room, got into bed and cried until they had to sedate me. I refused to leave my bed for three days, but I did start to eat. I didn't want to be that girl anymore. I made them take the mirror out of my bathroom, I couldn't bear to look at myself. It was that sudden the realisation- like flicking a switch. Oh I suppose you could put it down to the psychotherapy and the CBT and the antidepressants that I was on, and many other things, and it wasn't as if I didn't still want to be thin. Eating was still a huge battle with myself every meal time, but something inside me had intrinsically changed. I wanted to change, that was the difference. I didn't want to be that skinny girl in the window any more, I wanted my life back.'

'Control,' Sherlock said quietly.

'It's always about control,' Kate said, 'just as it is for you. Perhaps that's why I understand you so well. I thought that I was in control, that I could control my body when I couldn't control anything else, but I finally realised that the illness was controlling me.'

'Control and then acceptance,' he said, eyes narrowing slightly as he contemplated what she was
saying. 'That's what Anna keeps telling me. It's about accepting your illness and the fact that you need help. But it's painful, Kate,' he said with a frown. 'Ignoring emotion, denying it was much easier than trying to come to terms with it.'

'It gets easier,' she told him frankly. 'It's getting easier, look how far you've come.'

'Perhaps,' he said vaguely, and then yawned. 'I need to sleep, I think. Will you stay for a while?'

'Until you're asleep, of course,' she said.

'And talk to John about whatever it is that Mycroft said that unsettled him so much will you?' he said drowsily, eyes already closed. 'And tell him that smoking is a revolting habit.'

'John doesn't smoke,' Kate said, confused, but Sherlock was already asleep.
Kate was so deep in thought that she almost missed her stop on the tube; recognising the tiled walls of the Baker Street station seconds before the familiar beeping announced the imminent closing of the doors. Leaping up from her seat, she almost made it off the train in time, getting her shoulder jammed in the closing doors just as she was congratulating herself on her swift exit. This earned her several disapproving looks from her fellow passengers, and left her feeling considerably more shaken than the experience warranted.

Arriving at the top of the escalators, she searched through her pockets for her Oyster card for several minutes, before realising that she had stuck it into the book that she had been unable to concentrate on as a bookmark. Definitely rattled. Sherlock would have given her a sideways glance of poorly concealed amusement, and then fired off an accurate explanation of exactly what had happened and why. She missed him, she realised, not for the first time. It seemed like a long time since they had done something as normal as sit on the tube together. It had taken her months to convert him to the joys of traveling on the underground; to the delights of watching your fellow passengers from behind The Metro or a book, of trying to work out people's professions; the contents of the twelve bags at their feet; the relationship between a grey haired man and the teenage girl with him; the cause of the argument between the young couple opposite. It was a game that Kate had played on trains with her sister from an early age, and then with Alice through her teenage years; making up stories about the other people in their carriage. As she had grown into adulthood, Kate had graduated from making her stories as preposterous as possible, to attempting to discern the truth, using both observation and her gift of empathy to try to discern the truth beneath the everyday veneers that people presented to the world.

Sherlock, unsurprisingly, had turned the game into a competition, until they were sparring with each other to see who could work out the most about their fellow travellers, communicating in low murmurs, or occasionally via text if the subject of their scrutiny was close enough to overhear.

Sherlock always won on detail and deduction, of course, but Kate often picked up things that he didn't, beating him on the subtle perception of conflicting emotions and medical diagnoses. The medical details Sherlock quickly learnt and assimilated, studying Kate's old membership exam books voraciously until he could beat her to the diagnosis; the empathy he found more challenging. 'But how do you know?' he would ask, staring at her intently. 'You said that she was angry with him; what made you think that?'

'I just - knew,' Kate would say with a shrug.

And Sherlock would shake his head and tell her that wasn't possible; that she couldn't just pick up emotion from being near someone, that it had to be a learnt ability to pick up on subtle gestures, facial expression, something. Anything else..

'Just isn't logical?' she asked, completing his sentence for him. 'It isn't, that's what I keep telling you.'

He pretended to be frustrated by his inability to pick up this skill of hers, and the few times that it lead her to win the game. But the pleasure of it, as always, was not in the winning but in the intellectual exchange; in the ability to spark off each other. They had learnt so much from each other in this process, Kate mused as she walked slowly down Baker Street, or rather they had learnt so much about each other, about how each other's minds worked. In those early days she had found herself wishing that she could climb inside Sherlock's head, to view the cogs of his cognition whirring and clicking, like some huge, beautifully constructed machine; immaculately clean and uncluttered, and always perfectly oiled.
His head wasn't like that at all, she had come to discover. The great machine had been kept running only by the act of shutting everything else away behind vast steel doors, which intermittently leaked their jumbled contents of memory and emotion into the machine room; blocking the cogs and forcing Sherlock to shut it down entirely with drugs and sleep. Those had been his danger nights, although it had taken her until this illness of his to fully understand that.

These days, she wished that she could climb into his head for a different reason. She wished beyond all that was rational that she could go into those rooms while he slept, and sort out the memories for him. She wanted to be able to organise it all, placing them on shelves and in drawers, like tidying a child's bedroom, until he was left with a neat record of his past to sort through and finally come to some sort of peace with. And yet in a strange way, perhaps that was exactly what he was asking her to do by investigating his past with John.

Looking up, she found herself only a few doors from 221B. She remembered something that Sherlock had said to her in the early days of his illness - about wanting to keep on walking, to walk out of his life. What Kate wanted at that moment in time was almost the diametric opposite. She wanted, entirely irrationally she was aware, to be able to walk back into her life; as if these last couple of months had been some strange dream, and she could wake up, safe in Baker Street, and walk into the living room to find Sherlock, entirely sane and rational, hunched over his microscope, or arguing with John about a case.

Sherlock was getting better, of that she had no doubt, and for perhaps the first time since that awful night on the roof, she could see a way forward; could see him getting to a point where he would return home, get back to work even. Strangely, that thought made her feel even more alone. When he had been really ill she had been grateful that he was in the clinic, grateful that he was being looked after and she no longer had to feel so horribly responsible; grateful that she could return to being his girlfriend and not his nurse. Now she just wanted him back home in 221B where he belonged, and she was all too aware that there was still a long road to travel before that could happen.

Lost in thought, she didn't even notice that John's flat door was open and that he was standing in the doorway, a glass of wine in either hand, and almost walked past him on her way to the stairs, until his soft, 'Kate?' made her jump.

'Sorry, I was miles away,' she said, as she took the proffered glass of wine and followed him into his flat.

'Dinner's in the oven,' he said as she sat down on one of the sofas and gratefully took a gulp from the glass of wine.

'Bad day?' he asked.

'No,' she said with a frown, 'good day, or rather, Sherlock seems a lot better. I've just been thinking too much, thats all.' She smiled at John, to show him that there was no need for his concerned, 'I'm here if you need to talk,' look. Company would do her more good than navel gazing this evening, of that she was convinced. Better to find a practical way to help Sherlock than to waste time on introspection.

'He seemed very calm when I popped in to see him earlier,' John said, and Kate silently blessed him for choosing to take her comments at face value. He knew her well enough to know when she needed to talk and when she wanted distraction. Good. Time to plan the way forward, then.

'How was Mycroft?' Kate asked, suddenly remembering that today had been the day of the great interview.
'Surprisingly forthcoming,' John told her; then at Kate's expression of surprise, 'Well no, you're right, to start with he was cagey, but then he did a bit of a U-turn. Dismissed Andrea, told me that he would tell me whatever was necessary to help Sherlock and that was exactly what he did.'

He gave Kate a brief summary of the information that he had gained from Mycroft. 'I'll give you a copy of my notes when I've finished typing them up,' he said, 'but there's something else, Kate, something that Mycroft showed me that I don't have a clue what to do with.' He picked up a document wallet from the kitchen table and handed it to her. 'I don't know how to begin to explain this,' he said. 'It's probably best if you see for yourself.'
Kate stared in disbelief at the thick wedge of tightly written sheets of A4 file paper that John had handed her.

'Sherlock wrote this?' she asked.

'While he was in Elmhurst, yes.'

'Why didn't he tell us?'

'Because he doesn't remember, Kate. He wrote it after his first lot of ECT and before the second.'

'Did you tell him?'

John shook his head. 'I asked him if he wanted to know what I had found out from Mycroft, and he said that he didn't want to know anything until I had the full story; but then he didn't know about this. I was going to ask him directly, but it just sat wrong somehow. This will be a big thing for him Kate, and I don't want to make the wrong decision. That's why I need you to read it, and to tell me what you think.'

Kate frowned, still staring at the stack of paper. 'It feels - I don't know, disloyal somehow to read this. Its a little like reading someone's diary without their consent.'

'I know, thats how I felt, too, but without reading it, you can't help me to decide whether to show it to him or not. And we can't ask his permission without telling him about it, and I'm just not sure that's the right thing to do. You know him better than anyone else in the world, Kate. That's why I think that this should be our decision, not Ed Harris' or Anna's; because you know how he's likely to react, and more to the point, you'll know if he needs to see it, however hard it may be for him.'

'No pressure, then,' Kate muttered, as she picked up the papers quickly, and as if fearing that she might change her mind, began to read.

John left her to it, moving quietly round the kitchen area, putting the finishing touches to dinner; timing it almost perfectly, so that dinner was on the table a few minutes before she laid down the final sheet with a sigh, rubbing her aching neck. Looking at the clock she was surprised to see that only forty minutes had passed.

'Come and eat,' John said. Then, 'Tough read, isn't it?'

'It's not the words,' Kate said, as she came to sit at the table. 'There's nothing in there that I didn't suspect, or that he hasn't alluded to. That's the thing, John; he may have forgotten the detail, but the overall story, he knows. I don't think that there's anything in there that will be a shock to him. What he'll find difficult, as I did, is what he hasn't put into words. The hurt, the pressure of the pen on the paper, the scrawled writing. It's the emotion of the thing, the pain of the telling, the reminder of how he was back then. And the emotions in this are so very, very raw. Hurt, confusion, betrayal, loss, it's all in there, even if he hasn't put it into so many words.'

She paused for a moment, trying to control her own emotions. 'It's odd though, don't you think? How Sherlock at sixteen was capable of all of these emotions; he didn't shy away from them, at least not in this.'

John shook his head. 'I don't think that it's strange at all. I think that he shut down afterwards, I think
that was how he coped. I suspect that his mother was the only real attachment that he had, and that was intermittent, and very dependent on her illness.'

Kate looked at him confused and then closed her eyes for a moment as she realised what he was saying. 'She had bipolar too? Of course. It's there in his account if you read between the lines.'

'I think so. Mycroft tells me that she took medication, and he describes episodes when she wouldn't wash, wouldn't dress and would take to her bed for days at a time. Then there were the episodes of erratic behaviour, the extravagant shopping trips, hardly sleeping or eating, returning home in the early hours of the morning, often dropped off by all kinds of inappropriate men. Then she would disappear to France for several weeks, to reappear more subdued and life would return to normal.'

'What a thing to grow up with,' Kate murmured, 'and Sherlock adored his mother, I hadn't realised how much until I read this. Does he know do you think? About the bipolar?'

'Your guess is as good as mine. I suspect not, odd as it may sound. I don't think that it's something that he's ever let himself think about, and sometimes you're just too close to something to see the whole picture. Even Sherlock.'

'That's going to be an interesting conversation,' Kate said. 'Can we do some digging there? Get our facts straight before we tell him?'

'Of course,' John said, 'I was going to start off at their old house tomorrow. It's a conference centre now, run by an external company, well most of it, but Mycroft still has an apartment there. He tells me that there are boxes of old records in one of the attics; family photos, personal letters, that sort of thing.'

'Mycroft still lives there?' Kate asked. 'I got the impression that it had been sold, or - I don't know. Sherlock always talks about it in the past tense.

'From what Mycroft says he rarely goes there himself these days, but I think that they still own it, Kate; Sherlock and Mycroft between them. That's the impression that I got anyway. I would imagine that Sherlock finds it too painful to go back there. Mycroft told me that he offered him an apartment there at the time of the refit, but Sherlock refused. He's still got boxes and boxes of things in the attic apparently that he won't go near.'

'This is a rabbit hole and a half,' Kate murmured. 'Anything else that I should know?'

John shook his head. 'Mycroft knows surprisingly little about the abuse. I'll write up what he told me, but most of it is in that document. That's about as much as we know until I do some more digging.'

'And that's another reason that I don't think that we should show it to him,' Kate said. 'There's so much detail in there about the abuse, and I don't think that Sherlock is ready to deal with that yet.'

She picked up her fork, and started to eat, realising as she did so that she was starving. John was a surprisingly good cook, and he knew that his chicken madras was one of her favourites. 'This is good, thank you,' she said, realising that he was watching her.

'Its nice to see you eating for a change,' he said. 'So if we don't show him, do we tell him?'

'Yes, of course,' Kate said as if it was obvious. 'I couldn't keep something like this from him anyway. It's about trust John, it always is.' She paused for a moment, 'I'll talk to him about it if you like; explain why I don't think that he should see it yet, and why I don't want to tell him what's in it.'

John nodded. 'Would you? Thanks. I get the impression that he would take it better from you than
from me. Don't you find it odd, though, that Mycroft kept that account for all those years and didn't
tell Sherlock?'

Kate considered, and then shook her head, 'Not really. Mycroft tries to protect Sherlock. He always
has. He would never do anything to disrupt the equilibrium, given a choice. I'm beginning to realise
that of all of us, he has always been the most aware of how fragile Sherlock's sanity was; of how
much of an effort it was for him to stay on an even keel, to keep functioning sometimes.' Kate
paused, aware of John's puzzled expression. 'Think about it, John. Mycroft's reaction to my
appearance in Sherlock's life, and to a lesser extent yours. That was what it was all about, wasn't it?
Not wanting to change anything that could throw him off kilter, not wanting to risk tipping him over
the edge. I couldn't see it at the time, but now I think that I understand why he did what he did.'

'What he put you through, Kate, was unforgiveable.' John said, remembering the extent to which
Mycroft had gone to try to terminate Sherlock and Kate's relationship in the early days. 'I'm not sure
that I would be able to understand someone going to the extremes that he did to split you two up.'

'Can't you? Honestly? If you hadn't known me before, if I'd appeared out of the blue and suddenly
become such a huge part of Sherlock's life, would you have accepted it so easily?'

'I'm not sure,' John said with a frown. 'Perhaps not. But you're right about Mycroft's awareness of
Sherlock's illness. He told me about the time after Sherlock came out of hospital as a teenager, and
his time at Cambridge. Things that Sherlock has never really talked about. Mycroft took on a huge
burden for someone in his early twenties at the beginning of it all. He had to grow up fast, after his
father got ill. He had to go from being an older brother to a parent to Sherlock; not just organising his
care and keeping him safe when he first got home, but afterwards, at Cambridge. He had to pick him
up time and again when things got rocky; rescuing him from college; bringing him home, keeping
him safe, never knowing if this was going to be the beginning of another depressive episode or just
another low.'

'Mycroft talked to you about that?' Kate asked in wonder.

'He talked about everything, Kate. To start with he had Anthea with him taking notes, and he was
careful, measured, reserved, all the things that I would expect Mycroft to be; but then something
happened. He chucked Anthea out, disappeared for a while, and then when he came back he showed
me Sherlock's papers and told me that he would do whatever it took to help me to get the bottom of
Sherlock's past.'

'What else did he say?' Kate asked.

'All kinds of things; memories that obviously didn't come easily to him. As I said, it's probably easier
for you to read it once I've written it up properly, but did you know that it was Mycroft who got
Sherlock into rehab when he was at Cambridge?'

Kate shook her head. 'That's another thing that he never talks about.'

'And something that I'm not sure that we need to explore as part of our investigation, as Sherlock
seems to remember it, but it's relevant to his shared past with Mycroft. Very relevant. Sherlock went
in voluntarily, but when he tried to leave a few days later, Mycroft effectively had him kept there
against his will.'

'With a section?' Kate asked.

'Try again,' John said.
Kate groaned as she realised what he was saying. 'The vulnerable adult card,' she said finally. 'That's when he had him declared a vulnerable adult and incapable of making his own decisions. No wonder Sherlock resents him so much.'

'Precisely. But it's not as black and white as you might think. The way that Mycroft tells it, Sherlock was in a mess, Kate. He was in much deeper than he would allow himself to acknowledge. He was using every day. Mycroft believes, and I have to say that I agree with him, that if he hadn't intervened, Sherlock would have been lucky to survive six months out of the clinic, not to mention..'

John hesitated.

'What?' Kate asked.

John looked uncomfortable. 'He'd started stealing, Kate. Mycroft gave him an allowance but it wasn't enough. Small objects had started disappearing from the house; nothing that Sherlock thought would be missed - ornaments, silver snuff boxes, that sort of things. Mycroft only noticed when he was organising an inventory for the insurance. There had been thefts reported at college too, and Sherlock admitted to taking the odd wallet on the street. You know how good he is a pickpocketing? Well there you go.'

'Oh,' Kate frowned. 'I didn't know.'

This unsettled her more than she liked to admit. The drugs she could understand. Sherlock had been trying to self-medicate and had got sucked into the spiral of increasing using and stronger and stronger drugs. That was dependence for you. It was a chemical drive, and had been beyond his control. But her own moral code was strict and unshakeable. There were things that you simply didn't do, and stealing was one of them. She had to remind herself that he had stolen to support his habit, that it had been driven by that particular illness, that need for drugs that drove everything else away, but still, it was hard to hear. 'If it helps,' John was saying, watching her face. 'He only stole from those who he thought could afford it. You know what he's like, Kate; he can justify anything according to his own particular brand of morality, but he never deviates from that. He pick-pocketed rich businessmen, took the cash and left the wallet somewhere where it would be easily found and could be returned to the owner. Sometimes he pick-pocketed them in restaurants and returned the wallet before they realised that it was missing. Similarly he took cash and objects from people at college that he disliked and who he knew could easily replace them. '

'He would,' Kate said quietly.

'Kate, this isn't necessarily going to be pleasant,' John said. 'You have to be prepared for the fact that we may turn up facts about Sherlock that you don't like; that he may have done things in his past that you find difficult to deal with. '

'I know that,' Kate said, putting down her fork, and reaching for her glass of wine instead. 'it's fine; well logically it's fine anyway. I just wish that I was as good at Sherlock at switching off my emotions.'

'We know him, Kate,' John said, pushing away his own plate. 'Between us we know him inside out. We know who he is now, and all of this doesn't change that.'

And yet as he said goodnight to Kate listened, and by force of habit listened to the sound of the door to 221B opening and closing, proving that she was home safe, John wondered exactly what other surprises Sherlock’s past had in store for them.
Chapter 28

John stopped at the bottom of the steps and stared up at the imposing front door in amazement. He had known that Sherlock came from an affluent family but this - this was something else entirely.

The car sent by Mycroft had driven him here from Baker Street, leaving early to avoid the rush hour. Cushioned in its comfortable interior, drinking coffee from the thoughtfully provided flask and putting the finishing touches to his write-up of yesterday's interview with Mycroft, John had missed the turn off the motorway, looking out of the window only as they drove through the far side of the village. They turned through an impressive set of wrought iron gates, and John noticed the lodge house nestled to one side. Who lived there, he wondered; an old family retainer still perhaps? They drove up the sweeping gravel drive to stop in front of a beautiful stone house. It was older than John had imagined. From the few conversations that he had had with Sherlock about it, he had imagined an old Victorian pile, but this was older, much older.

Intrigued, John walked up the stone steps, noticing the discrete sign by the front door that said 'Reception', with an arrow pointing into the dark interior. The inside of the house had obviously undergone a considerable facelift since Sherlock’s time. John had been expecting stags heads and stuffed badgers in glass cases. Instead he walked into a vast white painted space. There were dark beams to the sides and a cast iron chandelier hanging from from vaulted ceiling of the double height room but there was a feeling of space that he hadn't expected. An imposing dark oak staircase led up on the left hand side of the space, with a small sign indicating that the guest rooms could be found upstairs.

A dark suited receptionist was sitting at a desk to the right hand side, and looked up as John walked in.

'Good Morning,' she said with a well practised smile. 'Can I help?'

'I'm here to see - actually I'm not sure who I'm here to see,' John trailed off. 'Mycroft Holmes said that he'd send someone to meet me.'

'Of course. Have a seat, and I'll phone through for you.'

John settled himself into an armchair by the fire which looked freshly lit, and picked up one of the papers artfully fanned out on the coffee table, next to the copies of Country Living, Horse and Hounds and several others appropriately themed magazines.

He had barely got past the headlines when he became aware of footsteps, and looked up to see Mycroft Holmes walking towards him.

'John,' he said. 'Welcome to Cantley Hall. I trust that you had a pleasant journey?'

'It was - very comfortable, thank you,' John said, shaking Mycroft's extended hand and standing up. 'I didn't expect you to come yourself.'

'It seemed simpler,' Mycroft said. 'Besides, I needed to come up and discuss some details with the management here. I decided to kill two birds with one stone. Shall we?'

'I thought that we'd begin with the guided tour,' Mycroft said, as he led John down a long corridor branching to the left behind the fireplace. 'The conference guests aren't arriving until ten today, so it's a good opportunity to see the place without the risk of interruption.'
The house was quite simply huge. Mycroft led John through a bewildering array of formal rooms, and meeting rooms, obviously converted for the purpose of the conference centre. All were beautiful, with gothic stone windows, leaded glass and window seats in many of the rooms that looked as old as the house itself. The kitchens, Mycroft told him, had been extensively modernised and extended to serve the conference venue. John wondered vaguely how he had got the planning permission though for what must be a listed building, and then reminded himself that this was Mycroft Holmes and such things were rarely a challenge to him. He could pull many strings, and red tape seemed to mysteriously melt at his approach.

'Do you have photos of what it was like before?' John asked. 'From when you and Sherlock were growing up here I mean?'

'Of course,' Mycroft said, as he lead him upstairs to show him the guest rooms. Was it John's imagination or was Mycroft less reserved than normal? His guard was at least partly down. He seemed less hard today, as if their conversation of yesterday was still preying on his mind. 'I have the plans from the refurbishment in electronic form,' Mycroft was saying. They show the plan of the house before and after, with photographs of each room.'

'Where was Sherlock's room?' John asked.

'In the old nursery wing, down the corridor,' Mycroft said, as he opened a door with an old fashioned key. Swipe cards were obviously considered too modern for Cantley Hall. 'This was my parent's room, at least nominally. In reality, it was my mother's room; my father usually slept in the guest bedroom across the way.'

The room was huge, light and bright and impeccably furnished, with one end set up as a living area with a sofa, coffee table and huge wall-mounted television. If John had been allocated this room, he didn't think that he would have spent much time at the conference.

'What's through that door?' he asked.

'Bathroom,' Mycroft said. 'The bath is the original, the rest has been redone.'

An immense white, claw-footed bath stood in the middle of one of the biggest bathrooms that John had ever seen. It was one vast expanse of gleaming white marble. 'Exactly what kind of conferences are held here, Mycroft?' John found himself asking.

'Very exclusive, expensive ones,' Mycroft replied dryly. 'Actually it tends to be used more for corporate training. We offer a wide array of outside activities as well as the lecture and meeting rooms. Clay pigeon shooting, assault courses, team games, that sort of things.'

'It's - impressive,' John said, as Mycroft showed him back into the corridor. 'So was your room in the nursery wing too?'

'As a child,' Mycroft said. 'When I came back from my first term at public school I was offered the option of moving into this wing, which I did. My room was this one just on the right here. Sherlock was offered the same option, but he chose to remain where he was.'

'He didn't like change much even then?' John speculated.

'Less then than now,' Mycroft replied. 'He always found transitions difficult. Coming home from school usually precipitated some kind of - incident, and similarly he was guaranteed to get into some major form of trouble in the first few days of term. He was sent home from school on more than one occasion because of it.'
'What did he do?' John asked curiously.

'Blew up the school science lab on one occasion, in the early hours of the morning,' Mycroft replied dryly. 'He was trying out an experiment based on some theory or other, I believe. Turns out his theory was correct, but was a little more - explosive than he had anticipated.'

'He sneaked into the science lab out of hours to do an experiment?' John said with disbelief, then considering, 'actually I can see it. And the other time?'

'Something involving the headmaster's dental plate, I believe. I never quite got to the bottom of that one.'

'Why did he do it, do you think?' John said.

'Because he could,' Mycroft replied. 'Because he would usually get away with it, and because, as now, he felt the need to prove that he was cleverer than everyone else.'

'And you?' John asked.

'I am aware that I am more intelligent than the majority of people that I meet, certainly. Unlike my brother, I do not feel the need to prove it,' Mycroft replied with a hint of a smile.

They had walked though a set of glass double doors and down a long corridor to a slightly darker area of the house. 'This was Sherlock's room,' Mycroft said quietly, opening a white painted door and standing back to let John through.

The room was smaller than John had expected. It fitted little more than a double bed, and the obligatory desk and wardrobe. A door at the far end led, John presumed, into an ensuite that must have been created in recent times from an adjacent room. Long, wide windows filled most of the upper half of the wall opposite the door, and looked out onto the garden. The bare branches of a gnarled apple tree and a cherry tree were just outside the window.

'Did Sherlock climb out the window using the trees?' John asked.

'The drainpipe, usually,' Mycroft said calmly. 'I had to lock the windows on more than one occasion.'

'When he came home from hospital?' John asked.

'And during the drugs period, and any time that he shut down at college,' Mycroft said with an uncharacteristic lack of bluster. John shot him a look. There was a tension in his jaw that John hadn't noticed before, that said that he was finding the topic of conversation difficult, but John knew him well enough to realise that he wouldn't appreciate John remarking on it.

'What was it like when Sherlock was here?' John asked, curiously. 'There are photos in the archive,' Mycroft said. 'It was a lot more - cluttered. There was a desk there.' he pointed to the corner by the window, where the wardrobe now resided, which was always covered in chemistry equipment and his latest project. And books, the floor was always covered in stacks of books.'

'Sounds familiar,' John said with a grin. Then, 'I know it's a little off the subject, but didn't you mind, Mycroft? Turning this place into a conference centre I mean. It must have been hard to see the old rooms go.'

'Not really,' Mycroft replied. 'It was a purely practical decision. Much of the wider estate had to be sold off to pay death duties, and without the revenue that used to bring, this place could no longer sustain itself. I had two options - sell altogether, or convert it to something more practical and retain
the building and at least some control. I chose the later.'

'And Sherlock?'

'Told me that he didn't care. Money doesn't concern him, John, it never has.' Mycroft checked his watch. 'I have a meeting in ten minutes. I'll show you where you can work. I've taken the liberty of having some boxes brought down from the attics for you to look through. I can show you the rest of the estate and the attics this afternoon.'
John Watson stood up and stretched, massaging his aching neck with one hand as he did so. He had been sitting on the floor for the last two hours, sorting slowly and painfully through the content of the twelve or so cardboard boxes that Mycroft had had brought down from the attics. They contained, he had informed John, all of the family photos and papers that he had been able to find up there.

Mycroft had also provided John with an encrypted laptop to work on, and a linked scanner and printer, to make copies of anything that he felt was relevant. John had divided the contents of the boxes into three categories; irrelevant, need scanning, and need to look at more closely. Walking across to the kitchen area of the flat he had been given to work in, he flicked on the kettle to make tea. Checking in the fridge he found it well stocked with the basics; not just milk, but also bread, cheese, butter, jam, orange juice. He could quite cheerfully live here for several days; perhaps that was Mycroft's intention. The bathroom was stocked with towels and toiletries from the conference centre, the bed in the bedroom had been made up. Was this flat part of the conference accommodation, he wondered? Wide french window at one end of the room let in the winter sunshine and looked directly out over wide lawns to a summerhouse beyond. There were woods at the far end of the garden. John vaguely remembered Sherlock babbling about the woods in the early stages of his illness; he had talked about monsters in the woods. John wondered if they were the same woods - he must remember to ask Mycroft later.

As he waited for the kettle to boil, John flicked idly through one of the photograph albums, showing pictures of Sherlock as a small child. Always with his mother, or a woman who he presumed was the nanny; never with his father, other than in the odd formal shot, in which the whole family looked slightly awkward. Flicking through it further was like fast forwarding through time. Sherlock grew from a grinning, curly haired little boy in shorts, to a scowling adolescent, Mycroft from an impeccably turned out adolescent, in tie and v-necked jumper, to an impeccably turned out twenty something, and then the pictures abruptly stopped. There were twenty or thirty photos tucked between the empty leaves towards the end of the album, obviously waiting to be stuck into the album when Sherlock's mother had died, and abandoned ever since.

Sherlock's mother was younger than John had imagined; a quick delve into the folder of copies of birth, death and marriage certificates revealed that she had been only twenty when she got married, twenty one when Mycroft was born, and twenty eight when Sherlock was born seven years later. The stack of certificates held another surprise; a death certificate for a child, a girl, stillborn two years after Mycroft's birth, no name recorded in either her birth or death certificate, recorded simply as 'Baby Holmes.' How sad. Did Sherlock know, he wondered? And was this the source of his mother's depression, or rather the trigger for her bipolar disorder.

He took the cup of tea back over to the boxes and curious now, opened a file labelled 'Adrienne Holmes, medical.'

And that was when he found it. Right at the back, folded in half, so that it could almost have been missed between the other papers. An invoice from a clinic in the Languedoc, close to Carcassonne, dated October 1994. John walked over to the table, pulled out Sherlock's mother's death certificate and double checked. The invoice was charging for treatment as an inpatient, right up to the day of Adrienne's death.

Which meant that she had still been at the clinic until the day that she died. She had woken up in the clinic, walked out of the door, got into a car and driven away. Where had the car come from, John wondered, and had she been alone in it? Because by four o'clock that afternoon, Adrienne Holmes
Intrigued now, John dug through the box of documents that he had set to one side to investigate fully later, but there was little further information. He wanted newspaper clippings, inquest reports, anything that might help him to piece together Sherlock's mother's last few hours. And police reports from the accident, they must exist somewhere surely?

John ran a hand through his hair in frustration. This was the sort of thing that Sherlock was so good at, and he was so bad at. Unfortunately, Sherlock was the one person that he couldn't ask for help at the moment; he would have to ask someone else, preferably someone who knew about police reports and how to access inquest outcomes. John knew exactly what Sherlock would have done; he would have phoned Lestrade. Would Sherlock mind if Greg did the same? He thought not. Sherlock had told him to do whatever he needed to after all, but John stupidly hadn't specifically asked who he could involve. Asking Sherlock himself was out, because even in his current state, he would quickly work out why John needed Greg's help. He would realise that John was investigating his mother's death, and John wasn't keen to open that particular can of worms just yet.

John picked up his mobile and tapped it against his teeth in a way that Rachael, his last girlfriend had always found intensely frustrating. Then he flipped it in the air, hoping that a Sherlock-style twiddle would help his investigative powers, but only succeeded in dropping it, then somehow managed to kick it under the sofa as he lunged to catch it, so that when Mycroft knocked and then entered the room a few seconds later, he was scrabbling under the sofa in a distinctly undignified manner.

'Lose something?' Mycroft asked mildly.

'Phone,' John said, feeling a little like a schoolboy who had been caught doing something that he shouldn't by his house master. 'I was about to phone Lestrade and I - oh it doesn't matter.'

'Police reports?' Mycroft asked.

'Yes. Do you think Sherlock will mind?'

'On the contrary. I think that's an excellent idea.'

'That's not what I asked, Mycroft.'

Mycroft's look of disparagement made John feel like a guilty schoolboy all over again.

'The workings of my brother's mind John are, as ever, a mystery to me,' he said, 'but if you need help accessing police reports, then Greg Lestrade is undoubtably the best person to approach. Ask him to send you the reports without reading them if you wish. Greg Lestrade is a man of principle, I'm sure that he would have no difficulty in complying with that request. Now shall I take you on that tour of the grounds?'
'Whose flat is this, by the way?' John asked, as they walked back in through the garden door an hour later.

'Sherlock's,' Mycroft said, to John's surprise. I arranged for us both to have one as part of the conversion, 'My brother, however, has never been here. Despite that, he refuses to allow me to let it out, or use it as conference accommodation, and so it remains empty. Another puzzle for you.'

'Perhaps he wants to keep something of his past,' John suggested.

'That would be sentiment, John, and as we both know, my brother despises sentiment.'

John shook his head slightly, 'No, Mycroft,' he said with a small smile, 'he pretends to despise sentiment.'

Mycroft considered for a few moments. 'I meant that he lacks sentiment for places and things, not for people,' he said slowly, 'myself excluded, of course.

'What happened, Mycroft?' John asked abruptly, before he had time to contemplate the wisdom of his question. 'Between you and Sherlock I mean. What happened to make things so - difficult, between you.'

'I told you what happened. I deprived him of his liberty and prevented him from making some extremely foolish decisions,' Mycroft replied cooly.

'By having him declared a vulnerable adult.'

'Precisely.'

'Just to clarify. This was during his time in rehab, yes?'

'He tried to discharge himself from the rehabilitation clinic, before he was ready,' John. 'I was advised that if he had left at that time, then he would almost certainly have fallen back into the cycle of addiction and stealing that had led him there in the first place. I was not prepared to permit that to happen.'

'So why the vulnerable adult card? Why not a section? He had the history there after all.'

'I was reliably informed that he was not sectionable at that point,' Mycroft replied. 'That while depressed he was not suicidal and that a mental health assessment would therefore be pointless.'

'So - you had him declared a vulnerable adult,' John said slowly.

'Precisely,' Mycroft said. 'The evidence was all there. Sherlock, by refusing to participate in the minutiae of daily life, had given me all the evidence that I needed. Here was a twenty year old man who could not provide himself with food, clean clothes, or recognise when he was too unwell to look after himself. A man who time and again had to be rescued by his family when he took to his bed and stopped eating for days at a time; who could not or would not wash his own clothes, cook his own meals, and had to my knowledge never ventured into a supermarket. He was, in a word, incapable of looking after himself without assistance.'

'But that wouldn't affect his capacity, surely.'
'There was a capacity assessment done at the same time,' Mycroft told him. 'Sherlock insisted that he could leave the clinic and be entirely independent of me. He was of course, furious at my interference. He was convinced that he could remain free from drugs, find a job and look after himself. Fortunately the panel disagreed, and I was named his guardian.'

'As you still are.'

'As I legally still remain, yes.'

John sat back and ran a hand through his hair. 'That was a hell of a trick to pull, Mycroft.'

'Was it? Do you honestly believe that he could survive without my assistance, John?'

'Now, yes, of course.'

'Back then? Or even when you first met him?'

'He was working, Mycroft. He'd found himself a flat.'

Then at Mycroft's raised eyebrow. 'Oh God, you found him the flat in Baker Street, you had an arrangement with Mrs Hudson, that was why the rent was so low.'

'Correct. Mrs Hudson was genuinely fond of Sherlock, she still is from a distance, as you are aware. But a rent that low in central London would have been more generosity than she could have afforded.'

John groaned. 'And you paid her to look after him too?'

'To clean, to make sure there was food in the fridge, to let me know when he was straying close to danger, certainly.'

'Does he know?' John asked.

'I suspect that he chose not to,' Mycroft replied cryptically, then looking at his watch, 'I must go. I will come and check on your progress later.'

Still reeling from Mycroft's revelations, John forced himself to spend a valuable half an hour at the computer, recording the details that he had learnt on his tour of the grounds, and more importantly from Mycroft himself. He also fired off a quick email to Lestrade, explaining what he needed in general terms, and asking him to phone him when he was free.

Then he sat cross-legged on the floor and attacked the medical file in earnest. Carefully, methodically, making notes as he went. The folder contained a number of letters from the clinic. Mainly invoices and the odd medication list, carefully copied to the Holmes family GP. Of course, the clinic was based in France, so Adrienne would have had to have her medication prescribed by a UK practitioner. And quite a list it was. From the invoices and the medication list, John was able to plot the course of an illness that had spanned nearly two decades. Starting, as he had suspected, after the death of her second child, although knowing what he did of bipolar disorder he suspected that there may well have been other, subtler episodes of depression prior to that. But that had been the trigger to the major illness, of that he had no doubt. The first invoice was dated six months after the birth - and death of that child. Postnatal depression then, or rather postnatal psychosis, judging by the medication list. And then again, two years later, more invoices, suggesting a second episode, another medication list, with a change in antidepressants; then a third episode in 1980, when Sherlock would have been two, neatly three, and suddenly lithium appeared on the medication list for the first time, and John knew for certain that Sherlock's mother had shared his illness.
The sound of a phone ringing made him jump. Not his mobile though, that had no signal, but the phone in the corner of the living area.

'Hello?' he answered it, convinced that it would be a wrong number.

'You know if you want me to contact you, then it helps if you either have phone reception, or leave an alternative contact number; Greg Lestrade's voice was heavy with sarcasm.

'How did you track me down?' John asked.

'I phoned Kate. Your email sounded as if it was urgent, and I knew that she'd know where you were.'

'Good detective work,' John said lightly.

'So tell me about these police reports that you need.'

And that was when John knew that it wouldn't work. Because he had known Greg Lestrade, and worked with him for over five years, and he couldn't give him half the story - easier to let him into the loop, because he knew without a shadow a doubt that that was exactly what Sherlock would have done.'

'I'm investigating the death of Adrienne Holmes in 1994,' he told him. 'She died in France in a -'

'Car accident, yes I know,' Lestrade said slowly.

'Sherlock told you?' John asked, surprised despite himself. Sherlock gave away so little personal information to anyone. He found it odd that he would have told Greg Lestrade about the circumstances of his mother's death.'Mycroft, actually,' Greg said, 'when he was trying to persuade me to let Sherlock work with me, years ago. I asked him where Sherlock's parents were, and Mycroft being Mycroft told me in no uncertain terms that neither of them were in a position to assist him.'

Greg hesitated and coughed slightly. John, well trained by Sherlock in picking up tells realised what he was saying. 'And you did some digging?' he asked. 'Seriously? You tried to investigate the Holmes family?'

'Nothing major,' Greg protested. 'You have to see it from my perspective, John. When I first met Sherlock he was very young and he seemed so - vulnerable. He was so obviously entirely dependent on Mycroft. The parent in me just thought that his own parents should know what was going on - if they were still around. Turns out Mycroft wasn't speaking in euphemisms when he told me that they weren't able to help.'

'So what did you find out?' John asked, wishing that he'd talked to Greg earlier.

'It was a long time ago, but from what I remember, Sherlock's father had some kind of stroke, no indication of foul play there, although it was proposed. What exactly he did for a living other than his more transparent activities, I never entirely managed to work out. There were rumblings at the time that his death had been, let's say, convenient for some people, but from what I understand, there was never any suggestion that his death was anything other than from natural causes.'

'What do you think that he did?' John asked.

'Some slightly shady business dealings I'd say. Viscount Richard Holmes was a procurer John. He supplied people with what they wanted, using his many and varied contacts. On paper it was all above board; as for the rest of it, I decided that digging too deep might well get me into more trouble
than I was prepared to take on.'

'You're kidding - what are we talking - guns, diamonds, how shady do you think it was?' John laughed slightly, the very proposition that Sherlock's father could have been involved in some kind of international subterfuge was ridiculous.

'As I said,' Greg continued, and John noticed that there was no hint of amusement in his tone, 'I decided not to dig. I'm not sure that it's relevant, and my guess is that that's one particular skeleton in the family cupboard that Mycroft won't want you digging up.'

'Mycroft has given me free rein.'

'That may be - but be careful John. My own investigating was rewarded by a terse telephone conversation with the Chief Constable who told me in no uncertain terms to let things be.'

'And Sherlock's mother?'

'Car crash in France. The coroner ruled accidental death, but I wasn't quite so sure. Are you sure that this is relevant?'

John sighed. 'I have no idea. But I found an invoice from a clinic in France where Sherlock's mother had stayed before. She was discharged, or rather she left the clinic the morning of her death.'

'When you say clinic, I take it that you're not talking about a health spa.'

'It was a psychiatric unit, Greg. I haven't managed to track down any medical records yet, but judging by the medication lists, it looks as if Sherlock's mother had manic depression.'

'Like Sherlock.'

'Exactly - hang on, have I just told you something that I shouldn't have?'

'It was fairly obvious, John. Well put it this way, he's never been exactly - normal, has he? Add that to his recent illness and - well, I put two and two together. So do you want me to do some digging with my French colleagues? Get hold of accident reports, inquest notes, that sort of thing?'

'Can you?'

'Of course. Anything to help Sherlock.'

As John put the phone down, his head was reeling. If Greg Lestrade, who wasn't medically trained had worked out that Sherlock was bipolar, then why the hell hadn't he? Had he quite simply been too close, or had he chosen not to think about it?

Kate had told him time and time again that there was nothing that he could have done before, that Sherlock hadn't been ready to address it. John mentally shook himself. Now wasn't the time for self-doubt. You couldn't change the past, he knew that. The best way to help Sherlock now was to find out what had happened to his parents. He pulled the box of papers back towards him and started to sort his way back through the next folder.
Anna arrived at work that day to find a very quiet Sherlock. Chloe had given her a synopsis of the previous days events, and Anna found herself torn between a quiet sense of pride in how well Chloe had managed the nightmare and the subsequent events of the day, and a mild and entirely irrational irritation that she was after all, not indispensible.

Sherlock that day was quiet almost to the point of silence. And compliant, too compliant, very different from the constant arguments of only a few days previously. When he finally woke in the middle of the morning, he sat up, and silently rested his head on his knees.

'Morning,' she said, coming over and resting a hand on his shoulder. 'How was yesterday?'

'Chloe would have told you how it was,' he said after a pause.

'She told me what she thought, I'm asking how you felt about it.'

But he just shook his head. 'I don't want to talk,' he said, throwing back the covers and sitting on the edge of the bed. 'Can I have a shower?'

'Of course,' Anna said frowning slightly. Perhaps the transition from hers to Chloe's care and back again wasn't going to go as smoothly as she had hoped. But then this was the first time that he'd volunteered to have a shower - or to do anything without cajoling since his admission. By lunchtime, she was seriously perturbed. Sherlock had had a shower, got dressed, taken his medication and drawn page after page in his sketchbook, all in as close to silence as he could manage.

The only return to near normality was at lunchtime, when he took the lid off the plate of food that he had been brought, shuddered and silently pushed it away.

'You need to eat, Sherlock,' Anna said. 'I can get you something else, but you have to have something.'

He shook his head.

'No isn't an option, you know that,' she said, sitting on the side of the bed next to his chair. 'What's going on?'

'Nothing's going on,' he said mildly, continuing with his drawing, then frowned and ripped the piece of paper out of the sketchbook before screwing it into a ball.

Anna waited - and waited. After a good three or four minutes she tried a change of tack. 'What are they saying?' she asked.

He shook his head. 'I don't want to talk about it.'

'Perhaps you need to.'

'Perhaps I can't.'

'Sherlock, I want to help.'

'Do you? Why?' he sounded distant, distracted, definitely listening to a voice other than hers.

'Because you are here to get better, and part of getting better is accepting that you need help.'
'I've accepted it,' he said, looking up at her, but avoiding her eyes. 'I'm taking medication, I'm up, I'm dressed, I'm functioning. What else do you want?'

'I want you to eat something.'

'Maybe later.'

'You said that at breakfast.'

'Then get me one of those revolting milkshake things if you must, I'll drink that, I just don't want to eat.'

'Why not?'

He sighed. 'Because the medication that you insist on me taking in such vast quantities is making me feel nauseous. Food is the last thing that I want.'

'It's a common side effect. I can get you something to help.'

'Fine,' he said, turning the page of the sketchbook and starting a new drawing.

'Sherlock -' Anna tried, as she stood up.

'I don't - want - to talk,' he said, glaring up at her. 'Please Anna, just leave me alone.'

'Fine,' she said, frowning slightly, as she went to get him the medication. She had thought that she had seen every variety of strange reaction to illness, but this was a puzzle. What was happening in his head to make him so withdrawn, she wondered, and so different from yesterday? Recovery often followed a pattern - a good day was often followed by a bad day. Perhaps that was all that it was. Somehow she doubted that it could be that simple.

... 

Ed Harris arrived promptly at four for his scheduled appointment with Sherlock. He looked a little jaded, Anna thought as she let him into the anteroom from the main corridor. 'Bad day?' she asked conversationally.

'I had to arrange a section for one of my patients,' he said, keeping his voice low so that his voice wouldn't carry to the main room. 'That's never pleasant.'

'To here?' Anna asked.

'No, to The Linderman Clinic. It's taken me most of the day. I'm just grateful that we managed to avoid that with Sherlock. How is he?'

'Quiet,' Anna said meaningfully.

'Ah. That's rarely a good sign.'

'That's what I thought.'

'Then let's see if we can get to the bottom of it,' Ed Harris said, standing back to let Anna swipe him through the inner door to Sherlock's room.'

Sherlock was sitting in his now customary position at the table. He looked tired, Anna thought, but had resisted her suggestions that he should try to sleep for a few hours before his appointment with
Ed Harris with a silent shake of his head. He had been drawing for a good five hours now, but had refused to let Anna look at his work; curling his arm around the sketchbook protectively whenever she came near.

'May I see?' Ed Harris asked

Sherlock shrugged and pushed the sketchbook across to him. There were page after page of sketches of an impressive looking stone house, then several pages of drawings of individual rooms; a drawing room, a formal dining room, a bedroom, all devoid of people, almost schematic in their exactness.

'The house that you grew up in?' Ed asked.

Sherlock nodded. 'I thought that they might help John,' he said quietly, his finger tracing a pattern on the table, avoiding eye contact.

Ed Harris turned the page to the final picture - a beautifully intricate sketch of a living room that he recognised as 221B Baker Street. The bookcase, the fireplace, the clock on the mantelpiece, the skull, all painstakingly drawn in the finest detail. And there, curled up in an armchair by the fire, reading a book, hair almost hiding her face, was Kate.

'This is good,' Ed Harris said.

'I want to go home,' Sherlock said quietly

'Is that why you drew it?'

'I drew it for Kate.'

Ed Harris nodded. 'Tell me why you want to go home.'

'I'm better - better than I was, anyway. The voices are quieter, almost gone, the depression is lifting, I'm out of bed, I'm functioning. I don't need to be here any more.'

'You're still not eating,' Anna pointed out gently, aware that for her, and for Ed Harris, they were now on familiar ground.

'I told you, the tablets are making me feel nauseous,' Sherlock said, eyes still fixed on the desk. 'I drank the build-up drink instead. I would be better off at home.'

Ed Harris watched him in silence, until Sherlock finally looked up at him.

'What would you do at home?' he asked.

'Sleep mainly,' Sherlock said. 'I can't sleep here.'

Anna looked confused, 'Sherlock, you've slept for hours here,' she said. 'This is the first day that you've managed more than two or three hours awake in a block.'

'But not without nightmares,' Ed Harris said thoughtfully when Sherlock remained silent. 'Do you think that the nightmares would be better at home?'

'Perhaps,' Sherlock said quietly.

'Because of Kate?'

Sherlock gave a small nod.
'What happened when Kate visited last night?' Ed Harris asked, sensing a connection between Sherlock's odd and distracted affect and his conversation with Kate the previous evening.

'We talked about the night on the roof,' Sherlock said, sounding distant and unemotional.

'And she told you that she understood, and you made your peace with it,' Ed Harris said, and Anna suddenly realised what was going on. The sleep that Sherlock was talking about would be permanent. That was what he meant when he said that he couldn't sleep in the clinic. As his depression lifted slightly, he believed that he had found the will to do what he had attempted before. That was why he wanted to leave. And more, Kate with all of her compassion and understanding had made him believe that she would understand this decision too. In her attempt to support him, she had somehow inadvertently give him a green light to do what only her voice had stopped him from doing before. Dangerous times. She caught Ed Harris' eye and he nodded slightly to show that he understood too.

'Sherlock, it would not be safe to allow you to go home,' he said finally. Calm, supportive, but somehow something in his tone left Sherlock in no doubt that he understood what he was asking for and why.

'I would be better at home,' Sherlock said stubbornly.

Ed Harris gave him a long hard look, which Sherlock returned, before looking away, resting his head back against the chair again and closing his eyes.

'Did you really think that you could convince me?' Ed Harris asked.

'I had to try,' Sherlock said.

'This is not the way forward,' Ed Harris said. 'This will get better. Can you believe that?'

A shake of the head, nothing more.

'Tell me about the nightmares,' Ed Harris said, changing the subject. And so Sherlock began to talk about his nightmares. Slowly at first, and then picking up speed, as he talked. Sherlock's dreams fit with what Ed knew of his childhood; dreams of being chased through his empty house, explaining the empty rooms in his drawings. Sometimes there were monsters, sometimes there was his father, with a demon's face, or worse still sometimes Moriarty's face, and sometimes he came into a room to find the monster devouring Kate, and that was the one that would wake him up screaming. His voice broke off as he said this, and Anna could see him struggling to regain control.

'Is what scares you most?' Ed Harris asked. 'That something could happen to Kate?'

Sherlock nodded slightly. 'Yes,' he said, so quietly that Anna could barely hear him.

'Do you see the monster's face?' Ed asked.

Another nod.

'And is it your face?'

Sherlock stared at him and then he face crumpled and he buried his face in his hands, shoulder shaking. Anna moved swiftly across the room to comfort him, and he allowed her to, not pulling away, resting his head against her shoulder for a moment.

'You fear that Kate will be harmed, whether directly or indirectly by her association with you,' Ed Harris told him, quietly, once he had calmed a little, and Anna had moved away with a reassuring
'Of course,' Sherlock said.

'What do the voices say?'

'That the safest thing for her would be if I removed myself from the equation.'

'Do you believe them?'

Sherlock looked up at him. 'It's simple logic, isn't it? Were I not here, then Kate would not be in any danger. The danger to her comes entirely from her association with me.'

'And yet that is a decision that she has a right to make for herself, surely? Tell me, do you believe that she is in danger from you directly also?'

Sherlock frowned and looked away before saying, 'The voices - sometimes, have said things about Kate - and John. They have - suggested things.'

He looked calm now, Anna thought, but from where she was sitting to the side of the table, she could see the figures that he was doodling on the paper. Monsters and smoke and fire.

'What sort of things?' Ed Harris was asking.

'Ridiculous things. That Kate and John are possessed by something else, that they were keeping me prisoner in my flat, creating my illness.'

'Did they tell you to hurt them?'

Sherlock twisted his head away, as if trying to escape the memory. 'I didn't want to,' he whispered, 'but staying in control became more and more of an effort.' He sounded tired and a little dazed, Anna thought. She trusted Ed though, and she knew that he needed to get the session to a point where he could wrap things up and leave Sherlock to get the sleep that he so badly needed.

'But you did stay in control, Sherlock. You didn't obey them, and you agreed to an admission - to keep them safe more than yourself, I suspect.'

Another almost imperceptible nod.

'So will you stay?'

'Can you stop the nightmares?' he asked bluntly.

'Nightmares in this context tend to come towards the end of sleep,' Ed Harris explained, 'when the medication has worn off and you are in a natural REM sleep state. We can't stop them with medication, Sherlock, but what you can do is to record them; write them down, draw them and most importantly talk about them with the nursing staff at the time. Tell them anything that you can remember, bring them into the light of day. Once they're recorded in detail then we can discuss them together. Once you understand them, then they are likely to reduce and eventually disappear.'

'I don't want Kate to know,' Sherlock said with a frown. 'Anything else is fine, but not this. I don't want her to know that she is involved in my nightmares.'

'That is your choice, of course, but can you tell me why you don't want her to know?'

'It would worry her. I don't want to worry her.'
'She wants to help, Sherlock.'

'I know, and she does, but not with this.'

'Fine,' Ed Harris repeated with a nod. 'I would suggest then that we leave it there and that you try to sleep. Anna can get you some more lorazepam to help, and I would advise you to take it. Sleep, try to eat, and I will see you again tomorrow.'
'Will you take some lorazepam?' Anna asked as the door closed behind Ed Harris.

Sherlock nodded and slowly, wearily, pushed back the table and went to lie on the bed, eyes closed, facing away from the door. Wary off leaving him alone, Anna rang the bell for the relief nurse for the day, and asked him to fetch Sherlock some medication. Chloe was on a day off, having given Anna a handover on the telephone that morning, and given the success of the previous day, Anna had felt confident enough to manage Sherlock on her own, a decision that she was realising may well have been premature.

'Don't beat yourself up about this,' she told him as the tablets arrived and he sat up to take them.

'Is it that obvious?'

'You're easier to read than you might like to think,' she told him. 'This is the illness, Sherlock, not you. You don't want to harm Kate or John, of course you don't. Your mind is twisting things, creating the worst horrors that it can imagine.'

'To create my own personal brand of hell. I know,' he said quietly, staring at the contents of the pot of tablets for a good minute before swallowing the lot with the proffered glass of water.

'You could have talked to me, you know,' Anna said mildly. 'I could have helped.'

Sherlock lay down, and closed his eyes. 'I had to try,' he said simply.

'Did you really think that Ed Harris would let you go home?' Anna asked.

'Not for a second,' came the sleepy reply.

... Anna waited until she was sure that he was asleep, then leaving the relief nurse to watch Sherlock, went to find Ed Harris, who she very much hoped would still be catching up on notes in his office.

'Sleeping?' Ed Harris asked, as he opened the door to her tentative knock.

'Yes.'

'But you're worried.'

'Correct,' Anna said with a smile. 'He's certainly a challenge, you were right about that, but that's not the problem. A challenge I can cope with, in fact it makes a refreshing change.'

'So what are you worried about, Anna?'

'Quite simply, I'm not convinced that I'm the right person to look after him.'

'He's certainly not an easy patient.'

Anna shook her head, 'No, it's not that. Don't get me wrong, I like him. He shows a very endearing mix of vulnerability and defensiveness. At times he's almost child-like, and then you get these flashes of unrestrained brilliance and logic. He is - fascinating and I very much suspect that this case will only get more interesting as John does his investigating into the past.'
'You're worried about how he relates to you?'

'Not until today, no. Perhaps he felt more comfortable talking to Chloe yesterday, I'm not sure, but I could hardly get two words out of him today. And if he can't talk to me, then where does that leave us?'

Ed Harris considered for a long moment before saying, 'Anna, you've read his psychological profile. Sherlock Holmes is a man who trusts only a handful of people in the world. The fact that he has allowed you to look after him with such compliance is a marker of how profoundly depressed he was; but now you are starting to see the real Sherlock. And he is abrasive and difficult and suspicious. That he trusts you enough to talk to you even intermittently is an achievement. I am convinced that you are absolutely the right person to take on his care; few others have the intellect and experience to manage him, and you do manage him well. No,' he said, holding up his hand to prevent her from interrupting him with protests, 'let me finish. You do manage him extremely well, and he does trust you. Opening up to anyone doesn't come easily to him, that's all, but I have every confidence that it will come with time.'

'And yet he talks to you in a way that he won't to me.'

'You're forgetting that when I met Sherlock he was profoundly psychotic - and terrified by that. He had John's recommendation of me as a person who he could trust. I looked after John Watson when he returned from Afghanistan, and the fact that I was known, and had helped John to recover was important to him. He told me the first day that I met him that he would have spoken to anyone who could have helped him to find a way out of his psychosis. He was desperate to find a way through it, that is the difference. Now he no longer believes that a way out is possible.'

'Today was a last ditch attempt to prove that he could take back control. Keeping him in an environment like this, when he has to rely entirely on others, to do as he is told, where he is deprived of his liberty, was never going to come easy to him. He had to try to get out, but subconsciously I think that he also wanted to fail.'

Anna shook her head, 'So complex,' she said.

'I need you on board with this, Anna,' Ed was saying. 'Because I suspect that what John Watson will discover will be far from easy. Sherlock needs to know about his past, but he needs our help to stop that past from destroying him.'

'You really think that it will be that bad?'

'I think that there is a good reason that Sherlock has blotted out much of his childhood; and I don't believe that the ECT is entirely to blame. Interestingly, he told me things during the first phase of his illness which he now has no memory of. In short, his memory of past events is getting worse.'

Anna was intrigued. 'A side effect of the medication do you think?'

Ed shook his head. 'No, I don't think so, rather a side-effect of his illness. He's blocking it out deliberately, Anna.'

'Hence the empty rooms in his drawings.'

'Precisely.'

'And the drawing of Kate?'

'Was meant as both an apology and a goodbye - proof of how much he loves her, I think. He wanted
her to have it if his little stunt today had succeeded in convincing me to allow him to leave here.'

'He must have known that would never work.'

'As he said - he had to try. Next he will try and push Kate away, just watch. For Sherlock's sake, I'd take away that sketchbook, Anna. Get him a new one, offer to send those drawings to John Watson as justification for removing that one. He'll want that picture back one day, but if you leave him with it then he'll destroy it, just as he is planning to destroy his relationship with Kate.'

'To protect her?'

'Precisely.'

'So how do we deal with that.'

'I would very much suggest that you contact John Watson - ask for a fax number, or an email address to send him the pictures, and in the process make him aware of what Sherlock has tried to do today, and may try to do.'

'But not Kate?'

Ed Harris shook his head. 'Think about it, Anna. After all that she has been through do you really think that Kate could cope with hearing that not only is Sherlock still actively planning his own death, but that he is doing it in order to protect her? And more, that he is doing that in the belief that she both understands and accepts what he plans to do. Even without the details of the nightmares, which he has forbidden us to discuss with her, that is more information than I think that even she could bear.'

'No, tell John. He can meter it out for her as needed. Sherlock has asked her to go to Scotland with John to investigate what happened in Elmhurst - partly to put some distance between them, I think. Some time apart is precisely what they both need, Kate especially, until we can help Sherlock to unravel this.'
Chapter 33

Chapter Notes

Big warnings for triggers - mainly for suicide and depression, and a fair bit of angst too. If that's likely to upset you then please skip the next few chapters.

Thank you as ever for reading and reviewing. All comments gratefully received!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

When Anna went to check on Sherlock he was still sleeping, and Mark, the relief nurse on for that day, seemed happy enough to sit with him for a while, allowing Anna time to phone John Watson and tell him about the events of the day.

His phone though, when she rang it, clicked straight into answer phone. She took the opportunity to get a cup of coffee from the canteen, and then tried again with the same result. She left a message asking him to contact her, leaving the clinic number, and then, aware that if he was out of signal he might not get the message for several hours, left her personal mobile number too.

Then, after a brief moment's indecision, she phoned Kate, who she knew must be finishing work soon, to warn her that Sherlock was asleep and was likely to remain so for several hours.

'You're welcome to come and sit with him if you want,' she said. 'But you may well just end up watching him sleep.'

'Has he had sedation?' Kate asked.

'Lorazepam, yes.'

'I knew that yesterday was too good to be true,' Kate said. 'I couldn't sleep for thinking about it last night. At the time, I was glad that he was talking about it, but it felt too neat somehow, as if he was trying to tie up loose ends.'

Anna hesitated for only a second before saying in a way that she hoped was reassuring, 'Good days are often followed by bad days, Kate, you know that.'

'Did he try to discharge himself?'

'He tried to get Ed Harris to let him go home, yes. He knew that we wouldn't let him self-discharge, so he tried to convince us that he was well enough to go home.'

'Idiot,' Kate muttered.

Anna smiled to herself. Kate would be okay, she thought. She knew Sherlock well, she wouldn't be fooled, but she still wanted to talk to John before she said anything to her about her conversation with Ed Harris.

'I'll stay away this evening,' Kate said, 'as long as you're sure that he's okay.'

'He'll be fine, Kate. It's just going to be a long, hard road for him. But Ed Harris isn't worried. He
says that this is no more than he expected.'

'Keep him safe, Anna,' Kate said quietly.

'We will. And if he wakes up and wants to see you, then I'll phone you.'

'Thank you. And Anna, can you give him a message for me?'

'Of course.'

'When he says that he doesn't want to see me - can you tell him not to be an idiot and that he's stuck
with me?'

Anna was impressed. Ed Harris had obviously underestimated Kate Watson - she knew exactly how
Sherlock's mind worked. 'Why do you think he'll do that?' she asked, not wanting to tell Kate that
her prediction matched Ed's almost perfectly.

Kate sighed. 'Because he always feels the need to protect me - always has, ever since we started
going out he's had this fear that I would become a target because of him. He sent me to self-defence
classes, made me learn how to fire a gun, get out of handcuffs, pick a lock, the whole lot.'

'And have you - ever become a target because of him, I mean?' Anna asked curiously.

'Strangely, no. The only time that I have ever been a target, was nothing to do with Sherlock - in fact
he was the one who rescued me.'

'A patient?'

'No, an ex-boyfriend.'

'So why do you think that he'll try to push you away?'

'Because under all that bluster, and that hard protective shell, neither of which you've seen the full
force of yet, I suspect, he can be very selfless. And because while he lets few people into his life, he
would do absolutely anything to protect those that he cares about.'

'I'll bear that in mind,' Anna said. 'And I'll pass on the message, if it comes to it.'

'Oh it will,' Kate said softly, as she put the phone down.


John opened the patio doors, enjoying the cold bite of the outside air after the muggy warmth of the
central heating. Remembering Greg Lestrade's irritation at being unable to contact him and mindful
that he should probably check-in with Kate, he walked round the building searching for a patch of
reception on his mobile. Finally the 'No service' message was replaced by one bar, then two. A
voicemail message popped up on his screen, blocked number.

He was expecting a message from Kate but instead he heard Anna's voice when he hit the play
button, and he found himself smiling just at the sound of it, before forcing himself to listen to what
she was saying.

Wishing that he had Sherlock's memory, he patted his pockets for a piece of paper and a pen, but
found neither. He had to listen to the message three times before he was sure that he had the number
memorised, then dialled it swiftly.
Anna picked up on the third ring.

'Anna? John Watson. I'm sorry to phone you when you're off duty but it sounded urgent.'

'No, it's fine, I wanted you to call. I'm just walking home from the tube, so it's good timing.'

'Sherlock okay?' John asked, wandering over to an ornamental fishpond with a fountain in the middle, and sitting down on the stone rim.

'What's that noise?'

'Fountain, sorry,' John said. 'I'm still at Sherlock's old house - I'm going to stay over, try to finish going through all the paperwork that I've found.'

'Anything interesting?' Anna asked.

'Tons, not much concrete yet though - I'll fill you in when I get back. But did you know that Sherlock's mother was bipolar too?'

'No,' Anna sounded surprised. 'Does he know?'

'I don't think so, even Mycroft wasn't sure, but I found a load of medication lists and invoices from a French clinic - doesn't look as if there's much doubt.'

'It would make sense. It does often run in families, although nobody's ever managed to fully track down the genetics. What else?'

'She was in the clinic and France until the morning that she died.'

'Ouch.'

'Could have been coincidence.'

'It could, but - what was it, car crash?'

'Yes, how did you know?'

'Sherlock's notes, hang on,' there was the sound of a key in a door and then the sound of footsteps on a wooden floor, then of another lock opening. Flat then, with a shared hallway, and Anna must live on the ground floor. Damn, Sherlock had really twisted his brain - he couldn't stop himself looking for clues, even when he didn't need to.

'Sorry about that,' Anna said, 'You know, I'd never let a mental health patient get in a car and drive the day of their discharge. How long was she in there for?'

'I didn't notice, but I've got the invoice somewhere. Quite a while from what I remember, five or six weeks maybe.'

'Then I definitely wouldn't have let her drive,' Anna said.

'That's what I'm worried about,' John said. 'You think that she killed herself?'

'I think it's a strong possibility,' Anna said, 'Look at what Sherlock - no, sorry..' She broke off.

'No go on,' John said, intrigued. 'You were going to say look at what Sherlock did the night on the roof?'
'Actually no,' Anna said, pausing to consider. 'There's no reason that you shouldn't know, although I wouldn't mention it to Kate. He tried to get Ed Harris to let him to leave the clinic today.'

'Seriously? But what - oh,' he broke off. 'Really?' He asked, 'but he's been so much better.'

'Better enough to come up with another plan it would seem - and again his care for Kate has a large part in that. That's what I mean. You need to get hold his mother's medical notes, John. Find out if she was actually discharged, or if she just walked out of the clinic.'

'Sherlock's going to take it hard,' John murmured, 'if she did kill herself.'

'Better for him to find out now than when he has less support. At least he'll understand. The families of patients who have committed suicide often feel angry, betrayed, they don't understand. Sherlock has been through that thought process. He knows where it comes from; that will help more than you might think.'

'I've already put in a request for the notes,' John said. 'Mycroft has offered to get them translated when they arrived, so hopefully we'll get some answers there. Anyway, your message sounded as if it was important.

What can I do for you?'

'Actually it's more what I can do for you,' Anna said. 'I've got some drawings for you - from Sherlock. Sketches that he's done of the old house. He thought that they might help.'

'Um - great,' John said, trying not to sound surprised. Sherlock drawing? Now here was something new. 'Can they wait until I get back - or...'

'If you give me your email address, then I'll get them scanned and sent to you tomorrow,' Anna said.

'How is he?' John asked, catching something in her tone.'

'Challenging,' Anna said. 'No that's not it, he's - silent. Quiet I can cope with, but today's been something else.'

'Yeah, he does that,' John said. 'Eight days was his record when we shared a flat. Eight days without any conversation other than a grunt and the occasional head shake. I used to go to the supermarket just to get some human interaction.'

Anna laughed, 'So I shouldn't take it personally?''

'Quite the reverse,' John said, 'If he didn't feel comfortable with you, then he'd pretend that everything was fine. He's a good actor when he wants to be, I'll give him that.'

'But that's the odd thing, he was trying to pretend that everything was fine. That was his strategy for trying to get Ed Harris to discharge him.'

'Stupid bastard,' John muttered. 'I though that he'd stopped playing games.'

'I don't think that he wanted it to work though,' Anna said. 'In fact he told me that he didn't think it would work, but that he had to try.'

'But why?'

'To pacify the voices I would imagine.'
'Is he actually taking his medication?' John asked.

'As far as I can tell, yes.'

'I'd check levels,' John said, 'Do a tox screen or whatever. I know that you're good, Anna, but this is Sherlock that we're talking about. Illusion is one of the things that he does best.'

'You think that he's hiding them?'

'I hope not,' John said, but I wouldn't put it past him.

'Then I'll check,' Anna said. 'Thanks for the tip.'

'So was that it?' John asked. 'Did you phone just to get my email address for the pictures? Only I got the impression that there was more to it than that.'

'There is,' Anna said, 'only-' she hesitated for a moment. 'John I know this is going to be difficult, but you can't tell Kate.'

'Go on,' John said calmly.

'Do I have your word that you won't tell her?'

'No,' John said firmly, 'I can't give you that. Kate is a good, good friend, Anna, and no disrespect, but I know her much better than you and Ed Harris do. So no, I won't promise not to tell her. What I will promise is to consider what you have to tell me carefully, and then decide what is best for Kate - and for Sherlock.'

'Sherlock specifically asked that Kate not be told.'

'Hang on - did he ask for her not to be told, or that you didn't tell her.'

'The latter.'

'John chuckled. 'There you go then. If he didn't want her told then he would have asked you not to tell me either. Come on, spit out, Anna, whatever it is.'

'Sherlock's nightmares,' Anna told him. 'They involve seeing Kate being attacked by some kind of monster.'

'Oh,' John said, then pausing to think. 'Did he say that he'd dreamt that before? Only a few weeks ago, when Kate first went back to work, he went for a nap, and woke up screaming Kate's name. When he finally calmed down enough to talk, he would only say that it had been a nightmare, and asked me not to tell her.'

'Sounds like the same dream,' Anna said, 'but there's more, John. The monster this time had his face - he's terrified of hurting her.'

'Ouch. Freud would have a field day.'

'I don't think that it needs Freud to work this one out. Like I say, he's terrified that he's going to hurt her, directly or indirectly, by his association with her. He loves her, he depends on her, and yet he feels that for her own protection he should push her away. Hence the dreams.'

'Possibly,' John said non-committally.
'What do you mean possibly?' Anna asked. 'Where are you by the way?'

'Outside, it's the only place with reception.'

'You must be freezing!' Anna said. 'Why don't you go back inside and phone me on the landline?'

As he walked back round the building, John realised that he was touched by her concern. Professional relationship, he told himself firmly. besides, Anna had told him early on that her responsibilities in looking after Sherlock extended to looking after those close to him too. That was what she was doing - looking after him. But he couldn't deny that he found her concern - touching.

'That was quick,' Anna said, as she picked up the phone on the second ring.

'I was only round the corner. But picking up where I left off, I think that you're underestimating Sherlock. Besides, he and Kate have been through this before - when they first got it together. Kate's been very definite about the fact that this is her choice. She knows that there might be danger, but she's accepted that risk.'

'But has Sherlock?' Anna asked. 'His illness is a game changer, don't forget. Any decision involves weighing up the evidence for and against a given outcome, looking at the relevant merits of each. His depression, by definition, will cause him to put more weight on the negatives than he would when he was well. I may be wrong, but I think that he'll try to push her away. Kate, for why it's worth, thinks that he'll do that too.'

'Wait, wait,' John said, rubbing his forehead with his free hand, 'I though that you said tht Sherlock didn't want Kate to know.'

'He doesn't want him to know about the nightmares,' Anna said, 'but I phoned Kate earlier to tell her that he was asleep and she might like to postpone her visit, and she predicted that he would try to push her away. I didn't have to say anything.'

'What did she say?' John asked.

'That when he said that he didn't want to see her, then I should tell him that he was an idiot and he was stuck with her.'

John laughed. 'Sounds like Kate.'

'He needs her, John, but if he says that he doesn't want to see her then we can't force him to.'

'Then we'll cross that bridge when we come to it. I'm happy to tell him not to be an idiot if it comes to it, but to be honest I'd be surprised. Anything else that I can help you with?'

'Ed Harris seems to think that some time apart would be good for both of them. Kate especially, I think. She looked tired and stressed when I saw her yesterday. It's been what six weeks now of her - or both of you, living and breathing Sherlock's illness. Take her to Scotland with you, John. Give her a chance to get a bit of distance, and Sherlock a chance to realise how much he needs her.'

'Isn't that a bit devious?' John asked, trying to keep the amusement out of his voice.

'It's sensible, John. Kate needs a break.'

'Yes she does,' John said thoughtfully. 'I'll see what I can do.'
The story of Kate's run-in with her ex-boyfriend, and Sherlock's rescue tactics is in Consequences, which is also on here.

Apologies for the long hiatus. More soon, hopefully!
When he woke, he felt oddly calm. The anger of earlier had vanished, and with it the desperate need to escape from these four walls. The curtains were drawn but from the artificial quality of the light just visible at the edges, he could tell that it was night. He tried to remember what time he had fallen asleep; late afternoon perhaps, but it was difficult to tell. Time lost its meaning here.

He rolled over and the nurse sitting at the desk in the corner looked up and smiled at him. 'You okay?' she asked.

He vaguely recognised her from the early days of his illness. Those nightmare days when he could not bear to be awake, when he would be flooded by the blackness as soon as he opened his eyes. When waking brought pain, and then the blessed kiss of lorazepam sliding into his veins and sleep again. Days when he had wished that he could just sleep forever and never wake up.

'I'm Helen,' the nurse was saying. 'I looked after you when you were first admitted, but you probably don't-

'I remember,' Sherlock cut in.

'Do you need anything?' Helen asked.

'Why are you here?' Sherlock asked bluntly, aware that he was being rude but no longer caring. Kate would have cared. She would have frowned slightly but remained silent, and he would have known that she was trying to fight the temptation to say something; fighting the temptation to try to change him, because she had promised him that she would never do that. But kindness to Kate was such an intrinsic part of her personality, that she struggled with the absence of it in others.

'Anna thought that you might be better with one of us watching you tonight,' Helen said, by way of explanation.

'You mean that she thinks I'm going to do something,' Sherlock said sharply.

'Are you?' Helen asked.

'No,' he replied quietly.

'Would you rather be left alone?'

'Is that an option?' He was aware that he sounded paranoid, but he couldn't help it. His mind was racing - fast, too fast, all over again. He took a few deep breaths and then closed his eyes, shutting out external stimuli as his mother had taught him long ago. Interesting. He had forgotten that. This had happened to him as a child; before his illness, before Elmhust, before his mother died. There were times then when his mind would race too fast, when noises seemed too loud, colours too bright, music too beautiful. His mother had taught him to walk away from it, to find somewhere quiet, to put his hands over his ears and close his eyes and imagine himself somewhere safe and calm until it passed. He must have been what - five or six? Social situations brought these episodes on, he remembered. Too many people, too much noise, not being able to interpret the situation or understand the rules, terrified even then that he would provoke his father's anger. Sherlock, the child that he could rely on only to cause a scene and misbehave.

'Sherlock?' A quiet hand on his shoulder, which he resisted the temptation to shrug off.
'I'm okay,' he mumbled, pushing himself to a sitting position. 'What time is it?'

'Quarter past eleven,' Helen told him, checking her nurse's watch.

'Why are there no clocks in here?' he asked.

'Some patients find them over-stimulating, too much of a reminder of the outside world,' she explained, 'but I can bring one up if you like. She moved to a touch screen pad on the wall opposite his bed and brought up a clock on the wall. 23.17 the clock read. That was better. Night was his favourite time, when his mind worked most freely, when the world seemed most calm. And even in the middle of London, there was a delight in working when the majority of the population was wasting time in sleep; in solving a case as the sky outside 221b faded from inky blue to pink and then to the pale light of morning; in knowing that all the ends were neatly tied from a good night's work when others were just starting to wake and stumble sleepily towards the shower.

The voices were whispering again, telling him that he needed to get home, get away from here, but he pushed them away. Shut them in a room and close the door, that was the best way.

'It's too quiet in here,' he said abruptly.

'I can put the television on for you?' Helen offered. 'Provide some distraction from those voices.'

'I didn't say anything about voices,' he snapped, then stopped, closed his eyes and tried to push away the rising panic yet again.

'It's better if you talk about it,' Helen said to him gently. 'We're here to help, Sherlock, but we can't help if you don't talk to us.'

'I can't,' he said tightly.

'You could try?'

He shook his head, the voices rising in their intensity. Whispering all over again.

'How about some medication then? I've got your evening tablets here.'

He shrugged and then nodded. 'I don't want sleeping tablets though, not tonight.'

'That's okay. How about some pericyazine instead?'

He nodded silently, and held out his hand for the medication pot. There was pericyazine in there already, he noticed, and two tablets of haloperidol instead of the usual one.

'You'd already decided what to give me,' he said, trying to keep the suspicion out of his voice.

'There's no conspiracy in it, Sherlock,' Helen told him. 'The extra tablets were Anna's suggestion, based on how you were earlier.'

He shook the pot and considered the tablets. Pale yellow pericyazine, orange haloperidol and a whole rainbow of other tablets, all of them familiar. But there was a new tablet there, hidden under the others. Pale green with markings that he didn't recognise. He picked it up and turned it over in his fingers. A large 'M' on one side, the markings 'C14' on the other.

'What's this?' he asked.

'Clonazepam. It's an anxiolytic, and it's good for panic attacks.'
'I don't want it,' he said, handing it back to her, as the voices in his head screamed, 'Conspiracy!'

'Because you don't think that you need it?'

'Because I told Anna that I would take the medication as prescribed originally for a week. It's an experiment. I don't want to interfere with that.' The anger was coming back. Why was this woman so stupid, and why was she treating him like a child? If Anna was here she would understand, she would know what to say, know what to suggest. Even the other nurse - Chloe, she helped too in a different way. But he didn't know this woman, didn't like being stuck in a room with her. Didn't like feeling trapped.

He took some slow, deep breaths again. There were two options as he saw it. Either he would manage to distract himself, or he would have a melt-down and end up sedated again. Suddenly he found himself wishing that he could be home, with Kate, just to be able to talk to her, or even to be with her in silence, to be free to do what he needed to in order to distract himself.

Helen's calm voice cut through the silence. 'What do you do at home when you feel like this?'

He looked at her suspiciously. 'I'm not reading your mind,' she said calmly. 'It's a very predictable thought process. You're struggling with being here, you feel trapped, you want to go home. You've already said that once today, so of course you're going to think about it.'

'I would - distract myself,' he said slowly. 'I would try to watch television, I would maybe talk to Kate, and if that didn't work, I'd sleep.'

'Well we can do the television,' Helen said, walking to the control panel and pressing buttons until a panel on the wall opposite slid up to reveal a large television screen.

'Now what else?'

'Kate,' Sherlock muttered. 'I'd talk to Kate, if I could.'

'I can phone her,' Helen said. 'She told Anna anytime. Do you want to talk to her?'

He opened his mouth to say no, but instead nodded, trying to concentrate on the television while Helen took the phone into the corner of the room and he could hear the murmured conversation. Helen's reassurance, her murmured responses to Kate's questions, and then finally she handed him the phone.

'Hello,' came Kate's voice, sounding slightly amused, and just at the sound of her voice he felt his muscles relax. It felt - better, safer, easier, just from that sound.

'Did I wake you?'

'No, I couldn't sleep. I was just making a cup of tea. Helen's going to get you one too. Do you want me to come over?'

'No, it's fine,' he said. 'I just - wanted to talk to you.'

'Bad day?' she asked lightly. 'I would have come earlier, but Anna said that you were asleep.'

'I just - ' he hesitated. 'Yes, bad day.'

'Sure you don't want me to come over?'

'No, not at this time, and not with John away. I don't like to think of you having to go back to the flat.
on your own later on.'

'So what's up?'

Sherlock was silent.

'Come on,' she said gently. 'I know you. You hate talking on the phone. Which can only mean that there's something going round and round in your head that you can't get straight and that you need to talk about it.'

'It's all a mess, Kate,' he said quietly.

'No it isn't,' she said. 'It just feels like a mess. But you're getting better.'

'That's not what I mean.'

'So tell me.'

'Maybe later,' he said vaguely. 'Talk to me first will you? Tell me what happened at work today. Tell me about the cases that you saw. Distract me.'

And so Kate began to talk, and as she did, Sherlock wrapped his free arm around his knees, resting his cheek on the cool of the sheet and closed his eyes. Trying to focus on Kate's voice, trying to imagine that he was in 221b with her; that he was sitting in his chair listening to her talking about her day; analysing, commenting, asking questions, while she was curled up on the sofa, cup of tea in hand. He loved trying to work out the patterns that her mind made when she made decisions. Sometimes he thought that what they did was not so very different. Both involved a process of evidence gathering and deduction, but her work involved something more; some sixth sense that she claimed told her when she was about to make the wrong decision. And Sherlock would tell her that such an idea was illogical and ridiculous. That what she was describing was the voice of experience, nothing more, skipping through the usual deductive pathways and giving her an answer based on past cases, knowledge and forgotten memory. Logic and deduction, he would claim. That was what her work entailed, just as his did.

But what really interested him was the details. The things that Kate herself used to miss; who was with the patient, why they were there, what you could tell about their relationship with the patient from what they said or didn't say; how they were dressed, what they have brought with them. The subtext, the hidden stories, that was what interested him more than the diagnoses. Kate, with her characteristic carefulness, would never give away anything that would betray a patient's confidentiality, but the details required none of that. Humanity was fascinating in its complexity, and while Kate learnt how to observe, he learnt to observe her, and her reactions.

He lost track of time as he sat there; listening, talking, trying to forget the silent presence of Helen at the desk, who to her credit was doing her best to be as unobtrusive as possible. But at some point in that long conversation with Kate, a cup of tea appeared silently beside him, and absent mindedly he found himself drinking it. It tasted of home and of better days.
Chapter 35

Kate met John at Kings Cross as planned, smiling a little at the line of excited children waiting to have their photos taken with the luggage trolley half-lodged into the wall by the Platform Nine and Three Quarters sign. A nice touch, she thought. In this world where everything cost something, here was a beautifully understated acknowledgement of the series of books that had brought fame to this slightly down at heel station. Harry Potter himself might not be here, but the luggage trolley itself was enough.

John was waiting for her by the coffee bar as planned, and kissed her on the cheek in greeting.

‘Hello,’ he grinned. ‘You’re cutting it fine. Ten minutes until the train leaves. Let’s go.’

He pulled her rucksack from off her shoulder; the same rucksack, Kate realised, that had been part of Sherlock’s elaborate plot to thrown Mycroft off their trail almost exactly a year ago. The feminist in her wanted to protest that she could carry her own bag, but there was a gallantry in John’s gesture, which she somehow couldn’t object to. Odd how the same gesture at the hands of different men could be either gallant or sexist. At work she objected to colleagues waving her through doors first; it was an implication that as a female she was different from them, somehow weaker and in need of looking after. Sherlock was courteous too, in his own way, but that was different. He would never pull a chair out for her, for example, but the small gestures, opening doors for her, taking her coat, she appreciated because she knew they came from love and respect, and nothing else. She had cured him of the habit of walking on her outside on pavements. ‘I doubt that I’m going to get mowed down by a horse and cart,’ she murmured to him the first time that he tried it.

‘Stray motorbike is always a possibility,’ he said, narrowing his eyes slightly as he pretended to consider the odds.

‘Or a drunk driver, I suppose,’ Kate said, trying to keep a straight face. ‘If that happens, then you have my permission to pull me out of the way.’

Manners were different to sexism, she had come to recognise. Allowing John to carry her bag came for him not from any implication that she was a member of the weaker sex, but more an acknowledgment that she had already carried her bag halfway across London after a long day at work, while he had had the benefit of a private car from Baker Street.

‘Please tell me that you’ve got the tickets,’ she said as they approached the barrier. John flashed them at the ticket inspector and they were waved through.

‘Which carriage?’ Kate asked.

‘This one,’ John said nonchalantly, showing their tickets to the attendant on the first class section. ‘And before you say anything, remember that Mycroft arranged this, or rather his assistant did, so you’re not allowed to protest about the accommodation in Edinburgh either. Just for once Kate, why don’t you stop being a socialist and allow yourself to be spoilt a little?’

‘You sound like Sherlock,’ Kate muttered, as they found their seats. Table for four - very nice, she just hoped that they wouldn’t have to share it.

‘Sherlock tells you to allow yourself to be spoilt?’

‘No, of course not. He tells me to get off my Guardian-reading, yoghurt-knitting high horse and accept that sometimes you shouldn’t allow money to be a issue.’
John smiled. ‘Sounds like Sherlock. But then money never was an issue for him anyway - I was always amazed that he actually carried a wallet, a little like the Queen.’

‘So is this like Eurostar?’ Kate asked, deliberately changing the subject. ‘Do we get a three course meal and a glass of champagne included in the price?’

‘If memory serves, it’s more a case of a packet of crisps and a sandwich, or a baked potato if you’re lucky.’ John said.

The doors were closing now, a whistle blew and the train started to slowly pull out of the station.

‘So, any news?’ Kate asked. John had only returned from Cantley Hall late last night. Kate had swapped into a punishing combination of a late finish the previous night, followed by an early start that morning, to enable her to catch the six o’clock train to Edinburgh, and be there ready for interviews early the next morning. She had seen John only briefly, long enough to confirm arrangements for today, and for him to pack her off to bed to get what sleep she could before returning to work.

‘Lots,’ he said, in response to her question, as he settled back into his seat and accepted a drink from the steward. ‘Hard to know where to start, really.’

‘Well we’ve got over four hours,’ she said. ‘Why don’t you tell me about the interviews with the old house staff, that seems like as good a place as any.’

But John shook his head. ‘There’s something else that you should see first,’ he said.

He pulled out his laptop, or rather not his laptop, but the encrypted one that Mycroft had sent him, tapped in several passwords, and then turned it round so that Kate could see the screen.

‘Read that,’ he said.
Chapter 36

Kate found herself staring at the screen for several minutes before she realised what she was looking at. It was a police report; French on one side of the split screen, English translation on the other. It was the police report for Sherlock's mother's accident. John watched her face as she read it. 'There are photos in the file minimised at the bottom of the page,' he said quietly. 'I didn't know if you'd want to...

'I'll look at them,' Kate said.

It made grim reading, John knew. The blessing was that both he and Kate were used to reading such reports - both from their day jobs in medicine and from their work with Sherlock. The car that Adrienne Holmes had been driving had been found at the bottom of a ravine. The mountain road had gone round a sharp left hand bend; Adrienne's car had gone straight on, crashing through the wooden barrier and ended up at the bottom of a ravine. Another driver had noticed the debris on the road from the fence, and raised the alarm some twenty minutes later, but by the time that the emergency services had got there, all that was left was a charred and smouldering wreck of twisted metal.

The photos of the wreck were - disturbing, John knew.

'How do they know it was her?' Kate asked.

'Dental records initially, then DNA matching - Sherlock's father insisted on that.'

'Wait - why?'

'You mean why did he want proof that it was really her ? I assumed that he just wanted conformation. You think that he suspected that she could have faked her death?

'It just seems an odd thing to do,' Kate said. 'I mean, the car was identified as being the one that she hired, the dental records matched, why go through DNA matching? Whose DNA did they use by the way?'

'Mycroft's,' John said quietly, wondering why he was only now beginning to consider the impact that all of this must have had on Mycroft Holmes. He would have been, what, twenty two at the time? Freshly out of University, only a few weeks into his new job in a government department. What sort of impact would his mothers death have had on him at such a time?

'Why not use Sherlock's DNA?' Kate asked. 'Why use Mycroft's?' John saw what she was doing, or was trying to do - she was asking the questions, all of the questions, just as Sherlock would of, had he been here.

'They didn't want him to know the grizzly details,' John said. 'They didn't even tell him that his mother was dead until six days after she died, did you know that? His father sent Mycroft up to get him for an exeat weekend. He was due to come home anyway, but when he got called in to his Housemaster's study at lunchtime, instead of the chauffeur turning up at five to pick him up, that was the first time that he would have known that something was wrong.'

'Christ,' Kate muttered, 'No wonder he coped with it so badly.'

'It gets worse,' John told her. 'The funeral was on the following Tuesday; so they told him that his mother was dead, and four days later he was watching her coffin being lowered into the ground. Not
exactly a lot of time to come to terms with what had happened before being asked to face the gritty reality of her death.'

'What does Mycroft say about it?'

John's face twisted slightly, as if he was unsure what to make of Mycroft's answer. 'He said that he was trying to protect Sherlock. He knew that there was a risk that Sherlock would have a melt-down, that if he did that at the funeral then his father would be - angry, that the consequences of that anger would be severe. He wanted to minimise Sherlock's time at home, and to make sure that he could be there with him.'

'So he was trying to protect him.'

'Apparently so.'

'Do we have any reason to doubt him?'

'No, but there's one thing else, Kate. They packed Sherlock back off to school the day two days after the funeral. And that was Mycroft's idea, again. He said that his father was virtually incandescent with anger. He wouldn't speak at the funeral, Mycroft did that, but by the sound of it it was a very formulaic service - a bible reading, a poem, a brief biography, but little more. Mycroft wanted to get Sherlock away from that - thought that he'd be safer at school than at home.'

'Why was his father so angry?' Kate asked.

'I don't know,' John said. 'Another mystery for us to solve. Mycroft said that his parents often argued, but he wasn't at home when his mother left for France this time, so he has no idea what the dynamics were.'

'Did Mycroft get on with his mother?'

'He admired her, I think. But I'm not convinced that she ever confided in him. What is interesting is that he had no idea what her visits to France entailed. He thought that she went to visit relatives when her relationship with his father got too fraught. His father told him that she had a string of affairs, but I could find no evidence of that.'

'Have you told Mycroft? About the clinic there?'

'Yes. He was - surprised, but not shocked. Said that his mother often took to her room for days at a time, was 'emotional', I think that was how he described it. He found it embarrassing, especially if he had friends from University to stay.'

'So -' Kate broke off, and rubbed at the side of her face in frustration. 'Actually I have no idea where I go from here. How do you do it, John? I've got a thousands questions running through my head, and no idea how to take any of them forward.'

John smiled at her. 'It takes practice,' he said. 'Sherlock used to say that you followed one track as far as you could - some of them are dead ends, some of them peter out and you have to put them on a back-burner while you wait for the evidence to come in, some lead to the centre of the labyrinth. You pick a thread, and just keep digging.'

'I do not for one second believe that Sherlock would have mixed that many metaphors,' Kate said solemnly.

'No, you're right,' John admitted. 'Most of those are mine. Sherlock made it sound a lot more
complicated, and used a lot more long words; that was the summarised version.'

'So which thread do I follow now?'

'The original one. Always go back to the beginning. So we've got Adrienne leaving the psychiatric hospital, getting in a car and ending up at the bottom of the cliff. What questions does that bring up?'

'Why did she leave the clinic; where was she going; how did she end up at the bottom of the cliff; why did Sherlock's father think that she might have tried to fake her own death; why was he angry with her.'

They were both silent for several minutes, considering.

'When you say it all like that, isn't there a possible link?' Kate said slowly. 'I might be miles wide of the mark, but what if she was trying to get away from her husband. That would tie in all in wouldn't it?'

'Perhaps, John said. 'The thought had crossed my mind too. The housekeeper who worked for the family at that time couldn't tell me much, other than that Adrienne and Richard weren't getting on well in the weeks before she went away - lots of raised voices, lots of arguments. Then she took to her room and a week later left for the clinic. I'm trying to track down a woman called Francois Marchand, who the housekeeper tells me was a fairly frequent visitor to the house, and often accompanied Adrienne on her trips abroad.'

'A companion - or a keeper?' Kate asked, interested. 'It's all a bit Victorian, isn't it?'

John laughed. 'A childhood friend, the housekeeper thought. Certainly someone that Adrienne was fond of.'

'Have you asked Sherlock about her?'

'Not yet. I'm trying to keep him out of it as much as I can. Mycroft remembers her coming to stay occasionally during his childhood, then a long gap, then she reappears after he went to University. I wondered if she got married in the interim, and her husband wasn't approved of perhaps, its just a theory.'

'Is Mycroft helping to track her down?'

'He's got people onto it, yes. It would be simple enough via birth records and so on, but my French is rudimentary to say the least - he's got people who can do the job far more easily.'

'Aren't there letters or anything from her among Sherlock's mothers things, something to give you a clue?'

'Nothing, thats the odd thing. There are lots of old invoices, official letters, family papers, but nothing personal relating to Adrienne at all.'

'You think Richard Holmes just had a big bonfire and burnt it all?'

'Perhaps. I don't know. Mycroft said he went back to work the day after he took Sherlock back to school, his father hardly even spoke of their mother after that.'

'So another dead end,' Kate said. ' For now anyway. So what's the next thread?'

'Now you're getting the hand of it,' John grinned. 'The next thread is the accident itself. What
happened and why.'

'So,' Kate said. 'She could have swerved to avoid someone?'

'No evidence of any other cars involved,' John said, 'The only debris was from her car. It was a narrow car. If another one was involved, then I'm reliably informed it would either have scraped the barrier, or the rock on the inside of the curve. There's no evidence of either.'

'She could have swerved to avoid something then - an animal perhaps?'

'No skid marks,' John said slowly, watching Kate's face. 'I checked and double checked. Nothing, and the photos of the scene corroborate that.'

'But she must have skidded,' Kate said. 'When she knew that she was going to hit the barrier she would have -'

John shook his head. 'She didn't brake, Kate.'

'But that means -' Kate broke off.

'It was a left hand bend,' John told her. 'She was driving on the right side of the road, the outside. The road went round a corner and she didn't. She hit the barrier head on and she didn't brake.'

'What if she blacked out?' Kate said desperately. 'She was on a whole load of psychotropic drugs, they could have dropped her blood pressure, made her black out.'

'She would have taken her foot off the accelerator,' John said gently. 'You know that. People lose their muscle tone when they black out, she would have slowed down and come to a stop. I'm told that she must have hit the barrier at a minimum of seventy miles and hour to go through it the way that she did.'

'A fit?' Kate asked, desperately not wanting to think about the alternative.

John shook his head slightly. 'You're grasping at straws, Kate. There's only one possible explanation for her accident, if we can still call it that, and we both know it.'

Kate closed her eyes tight for a moment, trying to focus on the seat beneath her, on the weight of her own body sitting in it, on the rocking movement of the train, on her breath in and out. It was an old technique that she'd learnt years ago during her own time in hospital. A relaxation and anchoring technique that she still used to remind herself of who she was and where she was, of her own place in the world when her thoughts threatened to splinter and become unreal.

'So you're saying that she killed herself,' she said quietly, focusing on the table, not wanting to look at John.

'Looks like it,' John said quietly. 'That's what I think, and that's what Lestrade thinks, given the evidence. He says that there is no other possible explanation, and I have to say that I agree. I think that Adrienne Holmes killed herself. Which leaves two questions; why did she do it, and how on earth are we going to tell Sherlock?'
Chapter 37

Kate knew exactly what Sherlock would say. He would say that the conclusion that Adrienne Holmes had taken her own life wasn't the only possible explanation action of all of the facts; that it was one possible explanation of some of the facts. There were other possibilities, there were always other possibilities. The crime scene could have been interfered with, evidence could have been destroyed; the pathologist who did the post-mortem could have been paid to turn a blind eye to a bullet wound, or a dose of strong sedative on the toxicology tests. There were dozens of alternative possibilities, but somehow she knew that John was right. Adrienne had killed herself, and the only cover-up was the French authorities giving her the benefit of the doubt, and recording it as an accidental death. In a Catholic country, that would have been important, to allow her to die within the grace of the church, and not outside it.

The why seemed obvious - depression, severe depression, and perhaps the knowledge that her youngest son was showing signs of the same illness that she had struggled with for most of her life. Kate found herself becoming irrationally angry with Adrienne for what she had done to Sherlock. How could she have left him? Sherlock had adored his mother, had relied on her, had survived his terms at school only with the promise of getting home to her, so how then could she take that away from him, irrespective of her own suffering? And how, above all else, as John said, were they ever going to tell Sherlock what had happened.

She was aware of John's quiet presence in the seat opposite, watching her silently, allowing her time to process it. The train was pulling into a station. York, already, Kate thought, it had to be, and was rewarded by the sight of the station sign sliding into view outside her window.

As the train slid to a halt, she noticed a man carrying large cardboard box waiting by the door to the First Class carriage, talking energetically to the guard. The guard finally nodded at him and he entered the carriage at the far end. He never emerged into their part of the carriage, but he re-emerged a few minutes later without the box. His step was lighter without it, Kate thought, watching him stride away across the platform, and wondering how long it would have taken Sherlock to work out what was in that box.

The appearance of the steward next to them, clearing his throat to get their attention as the train pulled out of the station made her jump.

'Delivery for you,' he said, sounding slightly perplexed. 'It would appear that someone has arranged for a take away for you from a local restaurant. Would you like me to plate it up for you?'

'That would be very kind, thank you,' John said. And then as the man turned to walk away, 'Wait, did they say who it was from?'

'A Mr Mycroft Holmes, I believe,' the steward said, and Kate made the mistake of catching John's eye, and the pair of them dissolved into giggles. The steward gave them a quizzical look as they struggled to control themselves. 'I believe there was a bottle of wine delivered too, if you would like-' but that only made things worse, and he gave them a curt nod and retreated to serve up the mysterious contents of the box.

'God, I needed that,' John said, wiping his eyes several minutes later. 'Good old Mycroft! How does he do it?'

'Anthea, I presume,' Kate said, still giggling. 'How many Michelin stars do you think the restaurant that meal came from had?'
'At least five, I would imagine' Johns aid solemnly, well aware that was several more than was possible. 'Oh well, beats a soggy sandwich, or a baked potato.'

The food, when it arrived, was definitely up to even Mycroft's high standards, and the expressions of their fellow passengers when it arrived, followed shortly after by the arrival of their predicted sandwiches and baked potatoes, reduced Kate to giggles again, as the steward fielded whispered conversations as the other passengers politely pointed to Kate and John's food, and the steward time and again explained that this was not standard East Coast Line fare.

'Do you think that he's explaining that the food only comes courtesy of a fairy godfather?' John asked, and then, 'How much of that wine have you actually drunk?' As Kate exploded into giggles yet again.

'Less than you,' she replied smartly. 'But talking of Mycroft, has it occurred to you that a lot of what we're discovering may impact on him as much as it does on Sherlock?'

'The Ice Man?' John said incredulously. 'Kate, I've never really seen him affected by anything. There was a slight chink in his armour when he was telling me about Sherlock's childhood, but other than that, I've never seen him show the slightest emotional reaction to anything.'

'I have,' Kate told him. 'That night when a Sherlock ended up on the roof. He cared, John. About Sherlock, about what had nearly happened. They need each other those two, much as they might both deny it.'

'But this is about the past, Kate. And Mycroft is so logical, so analytical. I don't believe that emotion will come into it.'

'If someone told you that your mother had killed herself, John. Wouldn't you care?'

'Of course I'd care, but then I'm not Mycroft Holmes, am I.'

... 

In his office in The House of Lords, Mycroft Holmes was sitting in his leather armchair, whiskey in hand, flicking through the police file that Lestrade had couriered across to him at his request. The French report of course held no challenges for him; he spoke four languages fluently, with a smattering of another three. Enough to make himself understood, and to conduct business deals which were best done without the presence of an interpreter. The file on the side table next to him contained a print-out of John's database and transcripts of his interviews with the house staff, together with the first draft of the report that his was formulating for Sherlock. In a technological age, Mycroft still preferred the feel of paper beneath his fingers when it was possible. It wasn't that he disliked or distrusted electronic formats, it was simply that he enjoyed the clarity of black type on white paper, enjoyed the ability to scribble notes in the margin as he was now.

'Police officers
Crime scene investigators
Pathologist
Inquest'

His list read. The meaning was clear to him, as it would have been to Sherlock. Those were the possible sites of corruption - of falsified evidence. He would have all four investigated - interviews, character profiles, retrieval of missing data. The laptop that he had lent to John was encrypted and entirely impossible to hack into, of course. But it downloaded automatically to Mycroft's office computer once a day. He had never told John this, and he had never asked, but after five years
working with Sherlock he would be disappointed to think that John wouldn't have assumed that this was exactly what he was doing.

There would be nothing, of course. He knew this, but he was also aware that Sherlock would need the hard proof. Without it his mind would veer off on tangents of possibility in its attempt to find an alternative explanation for their mother's death. Mycroft couldn't say that he was surprised. His mother's suicide explained many things; his father's rage, the rapid and formulaic nature of the funeral, the choice of a Church of England rather than a Catholic ceremony, when she had been baptised a Catholic and had attended mass intermittently for the whole of her life. It seemed unlikely that his father had feared the priest's questions, more likely that he had simply considered a Church of England funeral to be less complicated, less fussy.

'The dead are dead,' he had told Mycroft when he had queried the decision. 'Funerals are for the living, not for the deceased. If your mother has such a thing as an immortal soul, which frankly I find extremely unlikely, then it will reap it's just rewards, and no quantity of incense or requiem masses will atone for that.'

Mycroft had considered the use of the word atone odd at the time, but caught up in his concern for Sherlock, had thought little more of it. Now it seemed to him a clear indication of his father's awareness of the probable cause of his mothers death.

So - the dead were dead, as he said, and yet their influence lived on in others. In Sherlock. He scribbled a note, detailing the investigations he required, fixed it with a paper clip to the police report, and picking up his overcoat with one hand, opened the door to the outer office, handing the sheaf of papers to Anthea, who was still sitting there typing.

'See to this, would you?' he said. 'I have other business to attend to tonight.'

He barely registered her murmured acknowledgment as he shrugged on his coat and headed out of the door. Tonight was not a night to be alone with his own thoughts. Tonight was a night for company and distraction. He strode in the direction of his club, contemplating dinner and a few more drinks. He imagined that John considered him cold and emotionless in his management of his shared past with Sherlock. The truth was that he simply dealt with it differently. There was guilt there if he allowed it, over the damage that he had allowed to be inflicted on Sherlock by their father, but he was a practical man. He allowed these emotions to flow over him like water; watching, observing, never allowing them to penetrate his core. Emotion, sentiment could be useful at times, but for now it was simply a distraction to the task at hand, and that was so something that he would not permit himself the luxury of.
Sherlock was irritated. And frustrated. And above all else - bored.

He wanted more than anything else to get out of these four walls; to do something more than lie on the bed and flick through the television channels at ever increasing speeds. He was aware of Anna's silent presence, observing him, waiting for him to crack and throw the remote control against the wall, as he so badly wanted to.

'Don't you ever get bored?' he exploded eventually. 'Sitting there, watching me all the time, coming up with theories, trying to work out what's going on in my head?'

Anna pretended to consider. 'Not really,' she said calmly, walking over and taking the remote control out of his hand, switching off the television. 'Not when you're around anyway. How about you let me take you outside, get rid of some of that frustration with a bit of exercise?'

Sherlock shook his head. 'I don't think so,' he said, staring at the now blank screen in front of him.

'Sherlock, you're going to explode if you go on like this,' Anna told him. 'Oh not literally,' she said in answer to his disapproving look. 'But something's got to give, and it would better if you could learn to deal with this without sedation.'

'I don't want to go outside,' he said coldly, still avoiding eye contact.

Anna sat down in the chair at the side of the bed, and continued looking at him until he finally turned towards her.

'You remember when you were first admitted, when I told you that sometimes you needed to let us make decisions for you?' she asked, and he nodded reluctantly. 'Well now is one of those times. You need to get out of this room, you need to remind yourself that there's still a world out there, away from that mess that's going round and round in your head. Sitting there, endlessly obsessing about what Kate and John are discovering, trying to uncover your own memories, trying to piece together the evidence yourself is going to get you nowhere.'

He narrowed his eyes slightly, and there was irritation in that look and more - he looked almost offended at this suggestion that this was one puzzle that he was going to be unable to solve.

'You know that I'm right,' Anna said quietly. 'Why not give it a try? If you get outside and decide that it's all too much, we can come back in, but a change of scenery might be just what you need to help you work things through.'

He frowned, swallowed, and looked uncomfortable. 'You have to face the real world at some point, Sherlock,' Anna said. 'Trust me, it will help.'

He closed his eyes, as if trying to process something, then opened them again and nodded slightly.

'Good,' Anna said, 'I'll get Chloe to get both of our coats. It's cold out there.'

'What day is it?' Sherlock asked suddenly, realising that he had lost all track of time. 'I mean what's the date?'

'Saturday, November 3rd,' Anna told him. 'It's nearly Bonfire Night.'
'Remember, remember, the 5th of November, Gunpowder, Treason and Plot.' Sherlock said quietly.

'Did something happen on November 5th?' Anna asked, watching his face.

'My mother died two weeks before,' he told her. 'At the school bonfire that year, I thought for a moment that it was her body and not the guy's in the flames. I've hated it ever since. The fireworks always seemed like a celebration of death, because they are, in a way. A celebration of the death of Guido Fawkes and his co-conspirators and their barbaric deaths. A celebration of the triumph of the status quo and the establishment over change, over her.'

'What date did your mother die?' Anna asked, cogs clicking into place.

'October 17th,' he said with a speed that let Anna know that it was a day that was engraved on his brain, and would never be forgotten.'

'The same night that you ended up on he roof,' Anna said quietly. 'Did you know that?'

He shook his head, looking confused. 'No - I, I always remember, always. How could I have lost track of time like that? How could I not have known?'

'You weren't working,' Anna told him. 'Kate and John were keeping newspapers and any reminder of the outside world away from you. It's not surprising that you lost track. Perhaps subconsciously you did know, though. Anniversaries can often be a trigger, and it does seems like a huge coincidence.'

Sherlock shook his head slightly, considering, then took the proffered coat from Chloe, who had appeared silently in the room, put on his shoes, which had appeared on the floor, and followed Anna to the door.

He chose not to comment on the presence of the two men in white clinic uniforms who were waiting for them outside the door, and fell into step silently behind them. Of course they would not allow him outside without an escort. Of course Anna would believe that he might still try to escape. Would he, if the chance was there? It was possible. Logic dictated that he should stay, that he should try to believe that he could recover from this, but for once in his life, logic seemed a small consideration at this time. There were other more powerful motivators.

'John thinks that my mother killed herself,' he said conversationally, as they reached the outer door, and Anna used a combination of a swipe card and finger recognition to let them out onto a grassed lawn area, with gardens behind. It reminded him oddly of the grounds at Elmhurst. A strange place to find on the outskirts of the City of London. The space seemed a luxury. 'Where is this place?' he asked.

'Highgate,' Anna told him. 'Why?'

'My family kept a house not far from here,' he said, then with a nod. 'I recognise the skyline. We used to come up here for several weeks sometimes, when my father was sitting in the House of Lords., although he used it more than the rest of us did.'

'A town house and a country house,' Anna said with a smile. 'How was that?'

Sherlock shrugged. 'I missed the space of the country,' he said. 'The mental space as much as the physical space, but on the other hand-' he broke off and swallowed, staggered slightly and Anna guided him to a seat where he sat, head in hands. She rested a hand on his shoulder, letting him know that she was there. He was breathing fast, too fast, and the hands over his face were shaking
slightly, but she knew better than to interfere. She had taught him breathing techniques, ways to deal with these moments when he was able, but sometimes he just needed to ride the wave of it, as he was doing now.

'Flashback?' she asked when he finally sat up.

He nodded, eyes fixed on a tree on the opposite side of the garden.

'About your father?'

He nodded again. 'I'd forgotten,' he said. 'That house in Highgate. He never used to attack me there. It was too small, and I never went there without my mother.' He paused, closed his eyes, took a few deep breaths. Anna waited patiently for him to continue.

'Then one time I did,' he said. 'The main house was having some work done to the roof. They'd found asbestos. We all had to move out for a couple of weeks - house staff too. My mother was meant to be coming to Highgate with us, but - something happened.' He paused and frowned. 'She had to go away - to France. Mycroft was off staying with a school friend, he did that a lot. It was just me and my father.'

'How old were you?' Anna asked, when it was obvious that he wasn't going to continue unprompted.

'I was nine. We had a woman who came in during the day - she cleaned, tidied, cooked, kept an eye on me, but once she'd served dinner, she left and we were alone.'

'What happened?' Anna asked.

His face crumpled, as if he was in pain. 'I don't remember,' he whispered. 'I said something, that made him angry. He dragged me out of the drawing room by my hair, he seemed to enjoy doing that. The next thing I remember is coming to on the floor in my bedroom. Everything hurt.'

'What did you do?' Anna asked, wondering if he was aware of the implications of what he was saying.

'Crawled into bed, cried for my mother, eventually fell asleep. In the morning he acted as if nothing had happened.'

They sat in silence for a while, Anna fighting the temptation to ask the obvious question, but sensing that now was not the time for this.

'I think John's right you know,' he said finally.

'About your mother committing suicide?'

He nodded. 'I didn't want it to be true. I wanted him to find an alternative explanation. I accused my father or murdering her, you know, when I found out what had happened. The day after the funeral. That's why Mycroft took me back to school so quickly.'

'Why did you do that?'

His eyes were fixed in the distance, avoiding eye contact again. He seemed to find it easier that way. 'There was no family in France, Anna. None close enough for her to go and stay with regularly anyway. If there had been they would have come to the funeral. They didn't.'
'So - she wasn't staying with them when she went away?'

'Obviously not.'

'And you confronted your father with that?'

'He told me that she had been meeting a man, that she was a good for nothing whore. I told him that he was a liar and that he had probably had her killed himself. He slapped me, knocked me to the floor. He would have done worse, I think, if it wasn't for Mycroft. He heard the noise and came in and pulled him off me. Mycroft let me sleep in his room that night, and the next morning he drove me back to school.' He spoke calmly, as if he was discussing the weather, or a scientific concept. Disconnected now, but Anna knew that it wouldn't last.

'Did your father leave a mark - with the slap? Didn't the school ask questions?'

'Mycroft told my house-master that I'd tripped and fallen against a door. He had no reason to doubt his version of events.'

'Do you still think your father killed her?'

He shook his head. 'No, I told you, I think that she killed herself.'

'Do you have any idea why?'

He frowned and stared at her. 'Because she couldn't live with her illness, Anna, isn't it obvious?'

'You think that she was bipolar too? Do you have any evidence for that?'

'Her moods, how she reacted to things, the days spent in her room, the little white pills for her nerves. I suspect that she had a fairly hefty benzodiazepine addiction too. But then we all have a propensity to self-medicate, don't we,' he said bitterly.

'Is that why you're finding today so hard? You're worried about what Kate and John might find?'

'I miss her - Anna,' he said heavily. 'I miss Kate. I wanted to give her some space away from his -mess,' he waved his hand around I indicate the clinic. 'From me. But I've come to rely on her, and that scares me.'

'Do you trust her?'

'With my life,' Sherlock said, 'but it's more complicated than that.' He paused for a moment, then continued slowly. 'My need for her frustrates me, because it is illogical. Because without her -' he broke off.

'You would have done what you intended to that night on the roof?' Anna asked.

He nodded. 'I love her, and I feel bound by her,' he said finally. 'I have to try - for Kate, when every cell in my body is telling me that it is futile.' He hesitated, frowned slightly as if trying to find a logical way of continuing, then shook his head and fell silent.

'Is there any point in me telling you that this will get better?' Anna asked.

He shook his head. 'Not today he said,' then standing up. 'Can we walk? If you're going to force me into the outside world, then I might as well see a little more of it.'

'Sherlock-' Anna started, but he shook his head.
'I'm done with talking, Anna,' he said. 'Conversation solves nothing. I need facts, and only John and Kate can get me those.'
The taxi pulled up outside Craiglockhart Hospital at 9.30am sharp.

'Crikey,' Kate murmured, looking up at the impressive Victorian facade. 'I wouldn't have liked to have been a patient here a hundred years ago.'

'Oh it wasn't that bad by all accounts,' John said as he paid the driver which a generous tip. Mycroft had offered a car and a driver, of course, but John had somehow felt that this was more appropriate. Despite his comments to Kate the previous evening all of this luxury made him feel more than a little uncomfortable.

'Kate, you've read about this place,' he said with a smile at Kate's confused expression. 'Or at least the books appeared in the bookcase at 221b at about the time that you moved in. This is Craiglockhart. It's the hospital that Siegfried Sasson and Wilfred Owen were sent to in the Regeneration Trilogy, or rather it was the hospital that they were sent to that Pat Barker wrote about in the Regeneration Trilogy?

'Really? I had no idea that it was still a hospital.'

'It wasn't - that is it was requisitioned during the war, then used as a college for a long time, but it was turned back into a hospital for 'mentally disturbed teenagers' in the 1970s - the internet's words, not mine.'

'So remind me who we're here to see?'

'James Harrison. He was Sherlock's psychiatrist at Elmhurst - for the first half of his stay anyway.'

'Why only the first half?'

'He got another job - the job here in fact, and left.'

They had reached a reception desk on the left hand side of the front door. A hatch with fortified glass provided access to the receptionist behind. John explained to the receptionist who they were and she picked up the phone to tell James Harrison that they were here. The entrance hall, while retaining traces of the beauty of the original building still felt very institutional, and the whole place smelt vaguely of boiled cabbage. In short it felt like a school - or a psychiatric hospital, why did they always feel and smell the same, Kate wondered? It was a far cry from the clinic, with it's clean lines and stainless steel. Not for this first time she realised how fortunate Sherlock had been to have the option of being admitted there, rather to a standard psychiatric unit.

At the receptionist's request, she and John sat in two of the row of chairs placed onto the opposite side of the hall to wait, and within minutes, James Harrison's secretary had arrived to escort them to the psychiatrist's office on first floor of the building.

As she showed them in, Kate noticed to her surprise that there were not one! but two people in the room. James Harrison himself, was a pleasant looking man in his early fifties, who got up from his seat at the table in the corner of the office to shake Kate and John's hands, and greet them warmly.

'It's a pleasure to meet you,' he said. 'Can I introduce Sarah McKee? She was involved with Sherlock's care at Elmhurst.'
'You're Sarah Thompson!' John exclaimed. 'I've been trying to track you down.'

'So Mycroft told me,' she said as she shook his hand. 'I came here to work with James once I stopped working with Sherlock at his home. I've been here ever since. I changed my name when I got married, I suspect that's why you found it difficult to get hold of me, but Mycroft knew where I went to after I stopped working for him.'

'I never thought to ask,' John said. 'And Mycroft being Mycroft of course didn't think to tell me that he'd been in contact with you.'

'He hasn't changed much then,' Sarah said with the merest hint of a smile.

'You're the private psychiatric nurse who Mycroft hired to look after Sherlock after Elmhurst?' Kate interjected.

'Didn't he tell you?' Sarah asked. 'Knowing Mycroft, he probably didn't think it was relevant. Honestly those Holmes boys, both so brilliant, and both so emotionally -'

'Stunted?' Kate asked, with an amused smile. 'Couldn't have put it better myself.'

John had introduced Kate as a friend of Sherlock's, who also worked with them. It had been a calculated decision - not to deceive, but to ensure that information was not filtered for her ears. She had assured John that she could remain detached, interpret what she was hearing as a case history rather than being related to Sherlock as she knew him now. The time for emotion, for sentiment, would come later.

But she was a dreadful liar, as Sherlock always told her. Too open, too honest, and Sarah with her years of training read the truth in her face.

'Oh - you're more than a friend to Sherlock. Aren't you? I'm sorry. I didn't realise,' Sarah said.

'No it's fine,' Kate said, 'My fault really, John and I thought it would be easier this way. For what it's worth he's still fairly emotionally clueless when it comes to other people, but he's prepared to learn now, that's what's changed.'

Sarah nodded, but gave Kate as smile as John and James opened the case file and started discussing how the interview would proceed. That smile said it all. It said, 'Well done you, for realising what lies underneath that prickly exterior shell,' and more, it said, 'I'm glad that Sherlock has finally found someone who understands.'

Kate returned her smile with a little nod, then looked down, uncomfortable under the scrutiny and turned her attention back to what James and John were saying.

'The call came through from Sherlock's GP,' James was saying. 'I was the duty Consultant that week, so I called him back. There was no doubt in my mind that Sherlock needed admission. I offered to go and assess him at home, but oddly, that was declined. The GP wanted advice on how best to sedate him for transfer, and didn't like being told that unless Sherlock agreed to an admission, then he would need section papers to bring him here against his will. He tried to argue a lack of capacity, but I told him that he was on a sticky wicket legally with that one, and he eventually agreed to get a full mental health assessment organised. What the GP played down, and I didn't fully appreciate until later, was exactly how long Sherlock had been ill for. Eight or nine days of lying in bed, refusing to eat or drink, refusing to communicate before he came into us. He was in fairly poor shape by the time he got here. By rights he should have gone to a general hospital for medical care, but the director at the time was adamant that he should remain at Elmhurst for rehydration and nursing care.'
'Neil Simmonds? John asked, looking at his notes.

'Correct. I have no kind of idea what set of hold Richard Holmes had over him, but there was something. He said 'jump' and Simmonds asked how high. Sherlock always thought that the second course of ECT was his fathers idea. I'd left Elmhurst by that time, so it's difficult to say for certain if he was correct, but I learnt not to discount Sherlock's theories as paranoia. He was paranoid during the early stage of admission, certainly, but later-' he shook his head, I'm not so sure. All I can say is that Neil Simmonds treatment of Sherlock certainly stepped over certain ethical boundaries. Then there's the second consent form for ECT - have you seen that?'

'Signed by his father? I flicked through it,' John said. 'Why?'

'Look at the date,' James told him. 'It's dated the day that Sherlock's father came to confront him at Elmhurst about his allegations of abuse or rather my allegations of abuse which Sherlock corroborated. That was weeks before there was any indication that he needed further ECT - if he ever did at all, and I have my doubts about that.'

'He didn't,' Sarah added quietly. 'I was looking after him throughout his admission. He was more depressed, certainly, but he was still eating, drinking, taking medication. There was no indication for ECT. I told Simmonds my views, and was told to shut up or lose my job.'

Kate tried to keep her face neutral, but obviously failed.

'It wasn't like that,' Sarah told her. 'I would have put my job on the line if I'd thought that it would help, but I knew it wouldn't make any difference, and I didn't want to leave Sherlock - unprotected, if that's the right word. The ECT would have happened anyway. The best that I could do was to support him through it.'

'So you think that Sherlock's father asked for him to have further ECT? John asked. 'Why?'

'Sherlock had written a story,' Sarah said. 'About what he could remember from before his illness. It was meant to be confidential. It was meant to help him unravel what was real and what was paranoia. Simmonds got hold of it somehow, and he showed it to Sherlock's father.'

'We've seen it,' John told her. 'Mycroft kept a copy, and he confirms that the majority of it is true. So - what, you think that Sherlock's father requested the ECT to wipe his memory? Would anyone really have done that?'

'He had Simmonds in his pocket,' James Harrison told him. 'I have no idea what kind of hold he had over him, but looking back it looks likely that he was pulling the strings all along.'

'But you were Sherlock's supervising clinician,' Kate interrupted. 'Didn't you try to stop the second round of ECT?'

'I'd left by then,' James explained. 'The job here had come up, Simmonds let me leave quickly - too quickly in retrospect, within a few weeks. Looking back, I very much suspect that wasn't chance.'

'You think Sherlock's father was behind that too?'

'It seems likely, yes. There were other, more experienced candidates for the job. I don't think that anyone regrets their decision to appoint me now, but at the time it appears that certain members of the selection committee were leant on to ensure my appointment.'

'So - what - he had you fairly deliberately removed from Elmhurst rapidly because you were asking too many questions?' Kate asked incredulously.
'Sounds like a conspiracy theory, doesn't it. But yes, it seems the only logical explanation of all of the facts.'

Kate bit her lip, imagining what Sherlock would have said.

'So just to summarise - you're fairly sure that the abuse did happen, physical abuse, I mean.'

'Yes. I saw the scars myself - lines on Sherlock's back, which he said were caused by whipping, and Sherlock's father claimed were self-inflicted.'

'You realise that all record of abuse was removed from Sherlock's Elmhurst notes?' John asked. 'It's all conveniently gone missing.'

'Sherlock's father was not a pleasant man,' James Harrison said slowly. 'My belief was that Sherlock had stumbled on something that made him a very real risk to his father's reputation. The abuse alone might have been enough, his father certainly wanted to expunge that, but I suspect that there was more.'

'Mycroft said something similar. He said that his father wanted to lock Sherlock up and throw away the key.'

'Does he know why?'

'No. But like you, he thinks that the abuse was part of it, but not all of it. We may never know, I suspect. Did Sherlock ever discuss the abuse with you?'

'It was the one subject he would never touch on, outside the time that he let me see the scars, and the story that he wrote. We discussed time and again the fact that he would have to deal with it eventually, but he never felt ready. While his mental state continued to improve, I saw no reason to push it further. Not that you ever could push Sherlock into doing anything that he didn't want to do.'

'He hasn't changed much,' John said with a smile. 'Did he discuss it with you, Sarah?'

'No. He showed me the outhouse once, on one of our walks in the grounds. We more or less stumbled across it. He went ashen, I thought that he was going to faint. Then he told me what it was, that his father had taken him there to beat him, then he went silent, and wouldn't talk about it again.'

'Do you think that's all that happened there?' Kate asked, picking up on something in Sarah's tone.

'I don't know, not for sure. It's just - its odd isn't it? It all seemed a little calculated somehow. If the beatings came out of anger, then why take him away from the main house to do it? The servants were unlikely to speak out. It all seemed a little - ritualistic somehow. As if he was punishing Sherlock for something beyond the obvious.'

'Did you ever meet Sherlock's father?'

'Only once. At Elmhurst, when he came to see Sherlock after the story was discovered. It was the only time that he came to visit. Mycroft was the only one who visited before that. I was told to leave Sherlock and his father alone to talk. When I was finally allowed back into the room, Sherlock was distraught. He didn't talk for three days after that, and he never spoke of the abuse again.'

'Did he say anything about his father?'

'Only that he didn't know why his father hated him so much.'
'What do you think happened?' Kate asked.

Sarah looked at her, and hesitated for a second. 'What do I think? What do I really think? I think that all that anger had to come from somewhere. And I think it came from desire. I think that Sherlock's father abused him sexually when he was younger, and the physical abuse came later, once puberty hit and he no longer had that option open to him. It's a hunch though, nothing more.'

'A hunch based on pattern recognition, based on what you've seen before, though?'

Sarah nodded. 'Unfortunately, yes.'

'Can you tell us anything else about this theory?' John asked.

'He'd talked about the beatings, to some extent at least. It wasn't enough. There was something else, something that he was so ashamed of, that he kept it buried deep, something that he was terrified of bringing out into the light of day. He told me once that he thought talking about it would make him fracture, like a mirror - just - dissolve. It wasn't that he wouldn't talk about it, it was that he couldn't.'

Kate stared at her in wonder. This was someone who had understood Sherlock - absolutely, completely, and had been wise enough to leave well enough alone. Perhaps she should have done the same.

'And now?' she asked. 'Should we leave it alone now?'

'That's a question that probably only you can answer. What I would say is that there are two very positive points in getting to the bottom of this. Firstly, Sherlock himself has asked you to investigate, which proves that he is ready to hear the truth. The second is that he has good emotional support now - people that he loves, that he trusts to get him through this. Back then he didn't have that luxury.'

'He had you.'

Sarah shook her head. 'It's not the same though, is it. I was there because I was paid to be there - which isn't to say that I didn't care. I stayed in touch with him for years afterwards, as best I could, but it's not the same as a partner, or a close friend. And Mycroft - well Mycroft tried, but emotions were never exactly his strong point.'

'The staff at the house confirmed the beatings,' John said quietly. 'I talked to the old housekeeper. She knew what was going on, but said they were all too afraid of Viscount Holmes to do anything about it.'

'You didn't tell me that,' Kate said, turning to look at him.

'It's in the transcripts, Kate, You just hadn't got that far yet.'

'And the rest?'

'They didn't mention anything else. Their old family GP died a few years back, so I can't track him down. I'm still trying to get hold of the family friend who took Sherlock's mother on her trips to France. I suspect that I might get some more details from her.'

'Did the housekeeper say anything about the relationship between Sherlock's parents?' James Harrison asked.

'Only that it was stormy, that there were frequent raised voices, and that she learnt to ignore the
'So he was violent towards his wife too?'

'He was an angry man, by all accounts. One who liked getting his own way. That was all that I could get out of her.'

'Which fits the pattern,' James Harrison said with a nod.

'What a family to grow up in,' John said, with a small shake of his head. 'Explains a lot though, doesn't it?'

They spent the rest of the morning discussing Sherlock's Elmhurst admission, then had a break for lunch, Sarah taking John and Kate to the canteen, while James headed for a lunchtime meeting.

'So how is he anyway?' Sarah asked Kate as they walked. 'Sherlock, I mean. James told me he'd been ill for several weeks this time.'

'He's getting there,' Kate said. 'We tried to keep him at home to start with. He didn't want to go into hospital, but eventually - well. James, would have told you what happened.'

'He found a reason not to jump,' Sarah said thoughtfully. 'You should hold onto that.'

'Yes, you're right, I should,' Kate said.

'But it's not enough?'

'I don't have doubts about Sherlock,' Kate said, as they walked into the canteen and found a table, John thoughtfully offering to go off and get them food. 'I just - I don't know. I have doubts about what we're doing, I suppose. About digging all of it back up.'

'He knows, though, Kate,' Sarah told her. 'He won't have deleted it, not that, no matter how clever that mind palace of his is these days. He just needs to find his way back to it. And maybe this is just his way of not having to tell you about it himself.'

'What do you mean?' Kate asked.

'I mean, I may be wrong. Sherlock may have changed, but I very much suspect that this isn't as much about information gathering, as about getting you to understand. I very much suspect that Sherlock will find a way to get that information on his own.'

Chapter End Notes

Craiglockhart is, alas, past of Edinburgh Napier University now, but I chose to employ a little dramatic licence...
Chapter 40

Chapter Notes

Apologies to anyone who read the chapter I posted yesterday and got confused. I missed one out - this one should have come first.

Hopefully it all makes a bit more sense now!

The alarm rang, but Sherlock remained motionless, lying on the bed, eyes closed, hands templed under his chin.

Anna moved the bell closer to the bed. Nothing. 'Sherlock,' she said gently, then when he still failed to respond, she gave him a little shake and repeated his name. No response.

'Damn,' she murmured, lifting an eyelid to check his pupils. He didn't even flinch. She tried to elicit a pain response, squeezing his ear lobe and he batted her hand away. That was something, at least, but she was unable to elicit any other kind of response from him.

She checked his pulse - slow and regular, and his blood pressure - within normal range. Good, this was good. Wherever he was, whatever he was doing, he wasn't distressed by it. She should have realised that he wouldn't play by her rules; that he had never intended to. He had gone deep into his mind palace, and he would only be coming out when he had found what he was looking for.

'Anna, I need you to trust me,' he had said to her when she had walked in that morning.

'What do you mean?'

'I need to do something. Something that you won't like.'

'Go on.'

'I need to go into my mind palace, I need to find some answers.'

'About your father?' He nodded.

'And you think that they're in there - the answers, the memories. You think that you can find them?'

'I'm sure that they are.'

Anna looked at him thoughtfully. His serious, earnest gaze. He needs to me to agree to this, she thought. It's important to him. I wonder why?

'What would it involve?' she asked.

'These memories - wherever they are, they won't be easy to find. They'll be deep within my mind palace. It could take me several hours to find them, or longer - possibly days.'

'Days?' Anna shook her head slightly. 'I can't let you disappear into your head for days, Sherlock, you know that. It wouldn't be safe.'
'Anna, I need to do this,' he repeated.

'I know, I know that you do.' She sat down on the chair next to the bed and thought for a while. 'How about a compromise? I let you go in for an hour at a time. I promise to ensure that you are not disturbed for that hour, but at the end of it, you come out, let me know that you're okay, and then you can go back in. And we'll keep going like that until you find the answers that you're looking for.'

'Fine,' he had agreed. too easily, she later realised.

'So how do I get you back out?' she asked.

'Set an alarm,' Sherlock had said. 'That should work. An old-fashioned alarm clock would be best. Something with a recognisable ring, so that I'll know that's the signal to come out.'

And so Anna had procured an alarm clock, and they had had a trial run - five minutes, then the alarm had rung, and Sherlock had opened his eyes, stretched and said, 'Satisfied?' Anna had nodded, and then had insisted that he ate breakfast before he tried again.

But the second time was an entirely different story. There was no waking him this time. Ed Harris had chuckled when she had telephoned him to update him on the situation. 'You've been outwitted by Sherlock Holmes, Anna,' he said. 'It won't be the first time, and I doubt that it will be the last. I'd leave him to it. Check his observations regularly, and if there are any signs of distress, then be ready to sedate him with lorazepam to get him out of it.'

'In the same way that we'd treat catatonia?' Anna asked. 'Yes, that makes sense. That's almost what it looks like - a catatonic state.'

'So treat it as such, if it comes to it,' Ed Harris said. 'Until then, leave him to his mind palace, and lets hope that he finds the answers in there that he's looking for.'

And so Anna spent the rest of the day watching Sherlock's immobile form. His breathing remained slow and even, his pulse and blood pressure when she checked them, were stable. An hour or before the end of her shift, he suddenly sat up, swung his legs over the side of the bed and walked to the bathroom door, standing there silently, eyes glazed like a sleepwalker's, until she opened the door for him. Then he walked in and shut the door behind him. A few minutes later, she heard the toilet flushing, and she blocked his pathway back to the bed as he headed back towards it.

'Not so fast,' she said, as he tried to dodge round her, still looking glazed. 'Drink this,' and she handed him a plastic tumbler of water. He ignored it until she held it to his lips, and then took it from her hands and drained it in one, still staring straight ahead, eyes unfocused. 'And now another one,' she said, rapidly refilling the tumbler from the jug of water on the table. He drained that too, and then when she stepped out of his way, walked back to the bed, lay down again, arms by his side this time, and resumed his former state of unresponsiveness.

Anna couldn't help but be impressed by his ability to shut out all external stimuli - it was a handy skill to have. He remained unreactive to external noises within the room, and even to the light when she checked his pupils. He appeared undistressed by whatever memories he was uncovering, and so as Ed had suggested, she let him be.

He had asked her not to tell Kate what he was doing, claiming that he didn't want to worry her. Anna wondered if there wasn't another reason, if he hadn't timed this for while Kate was away, or more to the point arranged her absence to enable him to do exactly this.

She was relieved when it was John, and not Kate who phoned for an update that evening, and she
could ask for his advice with a clear conscience. Sherlock hadn't asked her to keep it quiet from John, and he was reassuringly unconcerned.

'He does this,' he said. 'Usually when he hits a low admittedly, then he can go AWOL for days at a time. But I've seen him disappear into his mind palace for a good twelve hours or so before, when he's trying to find a lost memory, or when he's doing what he terms as filing. It's not unusual for him. I'd just leave him to it. He'll come back when he's found what he's looking for.'

Anna found herself reassured by her conversation with John, and handed Sherlock's care over to the night staff, convinced that he would be awake and talking by the time that she returned in the morning.

When she walked into his room at half seven the next morning, however, she found him lying in exactly the same position that she had left him.

'We did try to move him,' the night shift told her, 'but he just batted us off. His observations were stable, so we thought it best to leave him as he was.

Anna was just starting to wonder exactly how long she could leave him in this state for without trying to terminate it with sedation, when several hours later, Sherlock opened his eyes, blinked as if trying to adjust his eyes to the light, then sat up and walked towards the bathroom.

'Wait, wait, where are you off too?' Anna asked.

'I need a shower,' he said.

'Did you find what you were looking for?' She asked.

'Yes. Now can you open the door please?'

Anna was perplexed. He seemed calm, a little detached perhaps, but that was only to expected after twenty four hours of trawling though his own head. She found his silence perturbing, though. He came out of the shower, dressed in the clothes that she gave him, ate breakfast and took his medication all with minimal conversation, declined the offer to talk, and then announced that he was tired, and curled up on the bed to sleep.

'I don't get it,' Anna told Ed Harris, when he phoned for an update later that morning. 'Whatever he found, you'd think that he'd want to talk about it.'

'Not necessarily. Perhaps he needs time to process it first. Besides, he hasn't slept of eaten for over twenty four hours Anna, remember? Just because his body was immobile doesn't mean that his brain hasn't been working hard. Give him time to rest, to process whatever it is that he's found, and maybe then he'll talk.'
It was still dark when he woke. The only light in the room was coming from the dull glow of the desk lamp, but the desk itself was thankfully empty; watching him from the monitor room, no doubt.

He swung his legs off the bed, reached for the plastic tumbler of water on the bedside table and drained it. Then filled it and drained it again, waiting for the click of the door.

'I need paper and some pens in different colours,' he said without looking up when the nurse on the night shift eventually let herself into the room.

'It's half three in the morning,' she told him. 'Why don't you try to go back to sleep - I can get you a sleeping tablet if you want?'

He shook his head impatiently. 'I've slept enough. Now I need to work.'

'Work on what, Sherlock?'

'Answers. I need to find answers.'

'And they can't wait until the morning?'

'No,' he said, walking over to a patch of wall next to the window. 'And I'll need something to stick things to the wall - drawing pins, Sellotape, whatever you have.'

'I can't give you drawing pins, Sherlock, you know that.'

'Sellotape then.'

'How about we start with the pens and paper and go from there.'

'Fine,' he said still staring at the wall as if he might find some answers on it already.

'I don't suppose I can persuade you to take a sleeping tablet and leave this to the morning?'

'No,' came the clipped response, as he unlocked the brakes on the bed and pushed it into the corner to give himself more room, then stood back and stared at the blank expanse of wall, fingers drumming impatiently.

... 

By the time that Anna walked into his room the next morning, he had papered the wall with pieces of A4 paper, some covered in diagrams, others in what looked like hieroglyphics.

She stood just inside the door, watching him. He would walk to the wall, write something on one of the pieces of paper, then return to his original position and consider it. A few minutes later he would walk forwards again, search the wall for some piece of information, rearrange two pieces of paper and then stand back again, eyes scanning the wall, looking for answers. After ten minutes or so of this, he sank into a cross-legged position on the floor, rested his head in his hands and sat perfectly still for several minutes, before standing up, scribbling something on a piece of paper on the far right of the wall, and then resuming his former standing position.

'What is it?' she asked quietly, but he ignored her.
She walked forwards, standing to the side of him, and tried to make out the writing on some of the pieces of paper, but it was written in some form of short-hand. She did recognise a diagram. It looked like a house plan, a copy of the one from his sketch book that she had given to John. These pieces of paper were all written in green, on the far left of the wall. The colour of the ink on the pieces of paper changed across the wall.

'It's a timeline,' she said. 'A timeline of your life, your memories.'

He turned and looked at her. 'Yes,' he said.

'You're trying to solve it on your own, without John and Kate.'

'I'm trying to find some answers,' he said, sounding distracted.

'Any chance you might take your medication for me?' she asked, already knowing the answer.

'Not this morning, no,' he said, still contemplating the wall.

'Sherlock-

'I need to think,' he said, rearranging another two pieces of paper on the wall, and then swearing as one of the blu-tacked pieces fell to the ground.

'What do they think I'm going to do with drawing pins? Swallow them?'

'There's always a risk,' Anna said. 'How about I make you a deal? You have some breakfast and take at least your lithium and the quetiapine, and I'll find you some Sellotape.'

'I'll manage with the blu-tack,' he said. 'I don't eat while I'm working. Slows me down.'

'And the medication?'

'Not today. I need to think.'

Anna took a step back, considering her best approach. A mixed episode? It certainly looked like it. He wasn't truly manic as such, but he was irritable and agitated, and yet there was a flatness in his affect that suggested more than simple hypomania. An edge of something darker. The fall from this when it came would be immense, she knew from experience. She wanted to cushion him from this if she could.

'You need to take your medication, Sherlock.'

'Or what?' he asked, an edge of suspicion to his tone, still staring at the wall.

She waited, until he turned to look at her. 'We don't deal in threats here, Sherlock,' she told him gently. 'You know that. I'm just asking you to trust me on this. I know that you think that you need to work, and I'm not disputing that. I'm not going to try to stop you. But equally I'm don't want to risk you throwing away all the good work that you've done here in the last few weeks and ending back at square one.

'You're agitated, your mood is elevated, you have much too much energy for someone who has been awake half the night. I know that this is probably the way that you always worked before, but this isn't before. This is potentially dangerous, Sherlock.'

'I'm fine, Anna,' he replied, again with that edge of distraction. 'Now let me work.'
She gave him a few minutes to finish a particularly prolonged piece of writing before asking, 'What do you think would happen if you stopped?'

'I can't stop.'

'Thats not what I asked.'

He closed his eyes, head down, pen clenched so hard in his hand that she thought it might crack. 'Not an option,' he said finally.

A mixed episode, she was right. So he worked to chase away the blackness. She wondered if it was always like this for him.

'Take these and I'll let you keep going,' she said, handing in the paper cup of tablets she had brought in with her.

He shook his head again.

'Sherlock if you don't take them, then you're heading for a major low when this is done.'

'Then I'll deal with that when this is done,' he said, turning back to the wall.

Anna was wise enough to know that further conversation was futile. She left the room briefly to update her colleagues, and to ask Chloe to telephone Ed Harris when it reached a more reasonable hour. Then she took up her seat at the desk and watched him. His behaviour was changing, becoming more agitated. He would stand in front of the wall, sometimes pacing backwards and forward in front of it muttering, but even when he was still, his hands betrayed his agitation. He would flick the pen back and forth between his fingers, or tap the fingers of his empty hand as if in some strange rhythm. Then he would dart forwards and write something on a piece of paper, or do more rearranging. Occasionally he would tear a piece of paper off the wall, scrunch it up and throw it into the ever increasing pile in the corner.

Every thirty minutes or so, he would sink into his cross-legged position, hands sometimes templed, sometimes buried in his increasingly wild curls, remain motionless for ten or fifteen minutes, before springing up again, reaching for a piece of paper, scribbling furiously on it, then walk over to pin it on the wall. Then the pacing and the staring would start all over again.

Had this been triggered by whatever he had found in his mind palace? It seemed likely. She had seen depression tip into mania before, but there was a different tinge to this. There was a sense of purpose that she had rarely encountered before. Manic patients often felt as if they had some great purpose to fulfil - a prize winning novel, some great scientific discovery but rarely were they correct. There were those in literature and art who had used their mania to great effect - Vincent Van Gogh, Virginia Woolf, but in Anna's experience they were few and far between. But with Sherlock - it was almost as of he had driven himself to this state to get the answers that he so desperately needed.

A soft tap on the door heralded Ed Harris' arrival, shown in by Chloe.

'How long has he been like this?' he asked.

'Since about half three this morning.'

'Will he talk to you?'

'He did to start with, but not now. He refused his medication, won't eat, won't drink. He says it slows him down.'
'He doesn't like to eat while he's working,' Ed said, watching Sherlock carefully as he spoke. 'He told me that before. Kate got somewhere with that apparently, persuaded him that his brain ran on glucose not fresh air, and that he needed to feed it. Sounds as if he's fallen back into old habits.'

'Should we call Kate back?' Anna asked. 'She's still in Edinburgh with John, and they're coming back via Shropshire, visiting the family friend who used to accompany his mother on her visits to France. They're not due back until the day after tomorrow.'

'Which I suspect is exactly how Sherlock wants it,' Ed replied. 'Let's ask him shall we?'

He walked forward, placing himself slightly to the side of Sherlock's wall, and slightly behind him, waiting for him to acknowledge his presence. Sherlock walked up to the wall, crossed out something on a piece of paper, scribbled a few characters in his unintelligible short-hand underneath, then tore the piece of paper of the wall entirely, and replaced it with a fresh one, before saying suspiciously, 'We don't have an appointment.'

'No, we don't.'

'So why are you here? I'm busy.'

'So I can see. Can you tell me about it?'

'There isn't time,' Sherlock muttered, considering the wall again. 'Where's John?'

'In Edinburgh, with Kate, I believe!' Ed said. 'Where you sent them.'

'I need to talk to him,' Sherlock said.

'I can phone him?' Anna offered. 'You could talk to him on the phone. Skype even. Would that help?'

Sherlock nodded distractedly, adjusting another piece of paper on the wall. 'Tell him not to tell Kate though,' he said. 'I can't do this with her here.'

'Why not?' Ed asked.

'Too distracting,' Sherlock murmured.

'Is this how you always work?'

'No.'

'Care to elaborate?'

Sherlock sighed and turned to face him. 'Your drugs have slowed me down,' he said. 'My memory is so poor I have to write everything down, because it's the only way that I can remember it. It's like trying to think through a thick fog. It's frustrating.' This last sentence was snapped as he turned back to the wall, hands raking through his hair in irritation.

'Can you accept that this is a mixed episode? That the drive that you feel might not be real?'

'I am doing what I need to do. This has nothing to do I with my illness.'

'You need answers?'

'Yes.'
'You are concerned that we will try to prevent you from finding them.'

'Will you?'

'No.'

'Good.'

Ed considered him for a while, watching him work. 'What can we do to help?' he asked finally.

'Provide me with a laptop to do some research of my own, and allow me to talk to John, without informing Kate.'

'Why are you so keen that Kate shouldn't know?'

'Her concern would complicate things.'

'Is that why you sent her away?'

'You know why I sent her away. You knew that I would.'

Ed waited to see if he would expand on this further, but he remained silent, walking between the pieces of paper, picking some of them up, putting them back, reading them, searching for answers.

'Do you believe the answers are there?'

'I know that they are.'

'Anna tells me that you spent all day yesterday in your mind palace.'

Sherlock turned his head away, eyes closed for a moment, hands clenched, and Anna could see him swallowing hard. She thought that he was going to crack, but instead he took a deep breath and said, 'I can't talk about it.'

'Did you find what you were looking for?'

'Yes.'

'And?'

'And my father was a monster. That much is apparent.'

'Do you think finding all of these answers will help you deal with this?'

'I think that I have to try.'

Ed nodded, keeping his concerns to himself. His calm acceptance of whatever patients threw at him never ceased to impress Anna. 'Then we will do what we can to support you in this. We can provide you with a tablet computer, certainly, and we can contact John for you. We can respect your wishes to not inform Kate, but equally the staff here cannot and will not lie for you.'

Sherlock nodded slightly in acceptance.

'If you do not take your medication then the depression and the voices will get worse. We can minimise what you take for now, but stopping them all together, even for a few days would be foolish.'
'They slow me down.'

'They treat your illness, Sherlock.'

'Maybe tomorrow, not today.'

'Is there anything else that you would like to talk about?'

'No...' distracted again. 'Can you give me printing capabilities?' he asked. 'To print out photos, diagrams, other documents?'

'If it would help, yes.'

Another nod, another long consideration of the board, then, 'Do you believe that people can be truly evil?'

'You're thinking about your father.'

Again the pause, the swallow, then a curt nod.

'What do you think?'

'I think that no sane human being should be capable of doing that to a child,' he said finally.

'There may have been events in his past that drove him to what he did. Damage inflicted in his own childhood. Have you considered that?'

'And you believe that any of that would somehow excuse what he did?' There was disgust in his voice, Anna registered, and an edge of anger. Dangerous times, but ones that Ed was more than capable of managing.

'Nothing excuses it, Sherlock. But sometimes reaching some kind of understanding can help you to accept it.'

'I don't - want - to accept it,' he said, every inch of his body held rigid as he turned back to the wall.

He's struggling to control this, Anna though, watching the tension in his jaw, the clenched fist. He was almost visibly shaking. She held her finger poised over the alarm for a moment, waiting for the crack, for the moment when he would start tearing the papers off the wall, lash out at chairs, tables, even Ed and her. The moment when frustration and despair would turn to anger, but it didn't come.

'You have a right to be angry with him,' Ed told him. 'What you have to find is a way forward from here. You are not your father, Sherlock. That is what you need to know. He almost certainly fulfilled the criteria for psychopathy. You do not.'

Sherlock was standing, still rigid, eyes fixed to the floor. He nodded slightly, then turned abruptly and walked across the room. 'I need a shower,' he said. Then when Anna failed to open the door snapped in frustration, 'Just open it will you? I'm not going to drown myself in it.'

'What was that about?' Anna murmured when the sound of the shower running masked their conversation.

'Escaping from a situation that he feels uncomfortable with, I would imagine. The bathroom is the only place that he's free to run to.'

'He did the same yesterday, when he came out of his mind palace.'
'Then you already know the answer. Has he talked to you about it at all?'

'Not a word.'

'And yet we are both only too aware of what he must have uncovered.'

'So we let him run with this, yes? Allow him access to a computer, let him talk to John, let him continue investigating.'

'For now, yes. Support him in his decisions. He's still rational, Anna, mixed episode or not. He's working to stop himself from dwelling on the memories, and that sounds like a reasonable coping strategy to me.'

'Even like this? At this pace?'

'Do you honestly believe that slowing him down is an option?'

'Not at the moment, no.'

'Then try to persuade him to take the medication if you can, keep him drinking if not eating, and help him find those answers. Because we both know that he won't stop until he does.'
Chapter 42

Anna waited for Sherlock to come out of the shower. She waited for ten minutes, fifteen, twenty. She could see his head and shoulders above the privacy screen on the black and white images on the screen by the bathroom door. He was standing stock still, head bent, eyes closed, allowing the water to beat on his head and the back of his neck.

She pressed the button on the intercom. 'You okay in there?' she asked.

He nodded, almost imperceptibly.

'You staying in there all day?'

A small shake of his head, aware that she would be watching him. There was despair in every movement.

'You can get through this, Sherlock,' she told him over the intercom. 'Shall I bring your clothes in?'

'If you want.'

By the time that she entered the room with the clothes, he was standing by the basin, towel wrapped round his waist, staring at himself in the bathroom mirror.

'Get dressed,' Anna told him. 'I want to show you something.' And then when he failed to move, she added, 'There's a case out there, Sherlock, remember? A case that you need to solve.'

She had to kick him out of this. She trusted her instincts, her instincts were generally good, and they said that he needed this, that he needed answers, and that if he stopped now then he would be all the way back to the beginning; back to the days of lying in bed, refusing to talk, refusing to eat. She had to salvage this if she could.

Waiting outside the bathroom, she watched him slowly getting dressed via the CCTV screen, contemplating the awkward balance - respecting privacy, whilst keeping him safe. The risk of self-harm during a mixed episode was high. If she was playing it by the book, then she should be in the room with him at all times. However, the memories of abuse that he had uncovered so recently, would make him even more uncomfortable with that than normal. A little distance then, maintain the illusion of privacy, even though he was well aware that she would be watching.

When he finally came out, she steered him towards his wall. 'Talk me through it,' she said.

'Why?' There it was. That edge of anger, trying to hide the despair.

'Because it's important.'

He shook his head. 'It isn't though, is it? Kate and John will find the answers anyway. I should stick to the original plan, leave them to get on with it.'

'What are you afraid of?' she asked.

'I don't know,' he said, then when she remained silent, he repeated more softly, 'I don't know.'

'What do you need, Sherlock?'

He walked to the window, fingers still flicking in that odd rhythm. 'I need to go outside. Can I go
'outside?'

'Not today, no.'

He looked irritated, 'Why not?'

'Because it wouldn't be safe.'

He rested his head against the cool of the window for a moment. 'I can't bear this,' he said.

'I know. And that's why it wouldn't be safe to let you go outside. Have you got anything planned?' she kept her tone light, as if they were discussing his plans for a day off, and not his plans to abscond or harm himself.

'I've considered a few options, yes.'

'Where would you go?'

He shook his head, 'Away from here. Far away,' he said.

'Mixed episodes are horrible, Sherlock,' she said after a few minutes silence. 'And that's what this is. The combination of irritation, agitation, racing thoughts and depression can be hard to manage at the best of times.'

'I can't get it out of my head,' he said so quietly that she could hardly hear him. 'What my father did to me. I just keep seeing it - over and over again on a loop.'

'Does the distraction help? When you're focused on the case?'

'Perhaps. A little. But when I stop, it's still there.'

'You ready to take those tablets yet?'

He closed his eyes, head still leaning against the window. 'I just wish that I could put my head through this and get outside,' he said finally.

'It's toughened glass,' Anna told him calmly. 'All that you'd end up with is a bruised forehead. Not even furniture will break through that, and believe me, people have tried.'

He sank onto the side of the bed, hands gripping the mattress, foot tapping even now, too agitated to remain still. Anna picked up the pot of tablets and handed them to him silently, and he nodded slightly in acquiescence. She had added lorazepam to the mix while he was in the shower, but he swallowed the lot without comment.

'Now are you going to let me help with this wall of yours?' she asked.

'I thought that you wanted me to stop.'

'No, I want to help you to do whatever it is that you have to do to get better.'

He shook his head. 'Not now, maybe later.' He paced back to the window, his right hand clenching into a fist and relaxing to flat; fist and then flat, over and again.

'You angry?' Anna asked, concentrating on keeping her voice calm and level, trying to avoid escalating his mood.
'Yes,' he replied.

'Who are you angry at?'

'This room, my ridiculous wall of insignificant pieces of paper, the clinic - everything.'

'Are you angry with me?' Anna's finger was poised over the panic button in her pocket now, just in case. Patients had lashed out at her before in this state, but she was sticking to the rules; they were watching from the monitor room; she wasn't letting him get between her and the door, and there were no missiles other than the water jug, nothing to be thrown. She could get out if she needed to, and others could be in the room within two minutes. She was safe, she had to ensure Sherlock was safe too, defuse this potential explosion if she could.

'A little,' he replied.

'Do you want to try and burn off some of that anger?'

He looked puzzled. 'How?' he asked eventually.

'Come with me,' she said.

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The clinic gym was well equipped - and safe. No bar bells waiting to be thrown here. Anna took Sherlock into a smaller room set aside from the main space. It was carpeted with mats of the kind used for martial arts, there was a punch bag hanging from the ceiling, and other equipment waiting in the corner, but it was all soft, all of it safe. She watched his jaw clench in irritation.

'Is this your anger management room?' he asked sarcastically.

'Bear with me, okay?' she said, as another member of clinic staff walked into the room behind them. Sherlock's head snapped round, eyeing him suspiciously. Anna risked a reassuring hand on his arm. 'It's okay,' she murmured. 'This is Dave, he's an instructor here. Dave, this is Sherlock.'

Dave reached out a hand to Sherlock, which he reluctantly shook. 'Anna tells me you might benefit from hitting something,' he said with a trace of irony.

'Or someone,' Sherlock replied, irritated. 'But I'm told that's not allowed.' His mind was racing. It said ex-soldier, infantry not artillery, sergeant, PT instructor, drug habit, clean for seven years, divorced, one child, probably a teenager. Racing through the possibilities, it wouldn't stop. 'Shut up,' he muttered.

'Voices?' Anna asked.

He shook his head, like a dog trying to shake water out of it's ears, aware that his breathing was speeding up. He didn't want to melt down, not here, not with this stranger. Strangers, he didn't like strangers, they made him feel uncomfortable. Christ what was this? It was if he was nine years old again, dragged out to yet another social event with his parents, shirt collar too tight, jacket pulling uncomfortably across his shoulders, and aware wherever he went of his fathers proprietary stare, of what lay behind it, of what would come later. Images flashed through his mind faster and faster in glorious technicolor, and they came with sounds and voices, making the edges of the gym blur and fade as his breathing sped up.

He walked away from Dave and Anna into the corner of room, resting his hands and his forehead on the smooth coldness of the wall, trying to refocus himself, trying to slow his breathing.
When he opened his eyes again, Anna was beside him, handing him a pair of boxing gloves. 'Beat them out of your head Sherlock. Give it a try,' she said.

And so he did. Dave steadied the punch bag while he hit it, again and again. 'You don't have to be polite with it,' he told him. 'And you don't have to be gentle with me. Hit it as hard as you can. Get some of that anger out. We can work on technique later.'

Forty five minutes later, they were walking back to his room. Sherlock was drenched in sweat and ready for another shower, but he felt - if not calm, then at least back in control. The anger had abated, and the images in his head had faded, blocked out for now by his aching muscles and stiff hands.

'Better?' Anna asked conversationally.

'A little.'

'Remember this. Exercise helps. Not just in the obvious ways - endorphins, serotonin release. It creates good distraction too. How are those voices now?'

'Quieter.'

'Good. So shower, and then lunch, and then we work.'

'Work?'

She grinned at him as she let him back into his room. 'The case Sherlock, your case. It still needs solving. You don't think that I'm going to miss an opportunity to work with the great Sherlock Holmes do you? Better hurry up though, John's skyping you in an hour.'
Kate and John had spent the day back at Craiglockhart, discussing the final few weeks of Sherlock's Elmhurst admission. Kate found this information easier. Despite Neil Simmonds and his attempts to keep Sherlock there, she was gratified to discover that he had found such strong allies, people who were prepared to risk their jobs to get him out of that place, against the wishes of the head of the clinic. Without their care and their principles, she shuddered to think what would have happened to him. She suspected that as his father had wanted, he would have been locked up indefinitely. Drugged, and given ECT, until little remained of the man that she knew today. Gratitude didn't begin to cover it.

'So you all put your jobs on the line?' she asked Sarah. 'You, this other nurse Clare, Matt the assistant psychologist, all of you - even you to an extent James. You risked being reported to the Royal College of Psychiatrists for unprofessional behaviour by encouraging them. Why did you all do it?'

'Because what Simmonds was found was wrong,' Sarah told her. 'We all knew it, but there was nothing that we could do about it, not directly anyway.'

'And it was Mycroft who got him out eventually?'

'Af ter his father had the stroke, yes.'

'Which was convenient, to say the least. Do you think he would have gone against his father if that hadn't happened?' John asked.

'You'd have to ask Mycroft about that,' James said. 'All I can tell you is that Mycroft had made initial enquiries - engaged lawyers and arranged for Sherlock to go and stay with relatives on France before his father's stroke So yes, I like to think that he would, have done it anyway.'

'Could it have been related?' Kate asked. 'I mean, his father had a cerebral haemorrhage, yes? They're usually aneurysmal and related to high blood pressure. If his father have found out what Mycroft was up to, then that could have caused the stroke in the first place?'

'It's possible,' James said. 'I have to say that it occurred to me at the time that it was all very - convenient, as you say. Either way, with his father incapacitated, Mycroft lost no time in getting the section lifted and Sherlock home.'

'And you went with him?' Kate asked Sarah. 'You looked after him there.'

'Yes, for about six months, a little longer.'

'And how was that?'

'It was - intriguing - and rewarding. I was almost tempted to look for other similar jobs when he no longer needed me, but I knew this one was unique. It worked because I knew Sherlock so well, because he trusted me, and because we respected each other.'

'How easy did he find it adjust to life back in the outside world?' John asked.

'Less easy than he wanted it to be,' Sarah said with a smile. 'He oscillated between wanting to flush all of his tablets done the toilet - literally on more than one occasion, because he didn't think he needed them anymore, and lying on his bed all day, convinced that he could never again have anything approximating a normal life.'
'So still cycling, basically?'

'It took a while to get the lithium dose right - and it takes six months to reach it's full effect anyway. So a lot of my job was cajoling him through the bad times, and trying to keep him level and on medication in the good times.' John shot a look at Kate, and she knew that they were both thinking the same thing. That this would be their challenge after he left hospital this time also. Kate had often wondered how on earth they would keep him on medication once he got home.'

'Tell his community psychiatric nurse to contact me when he's ready to go home if you like,' Sarah said, watching both their faces. 'It may have been nearly twenty years ago, but I could at least share my experience with her, maybe give her an idea of what to expect. I can't imagine that he'll react that differently this time.'

'What was the thing that he found most difficult,' John asked.

'The concentration problems,' Sarah answered promptly. 'Whether it was the ECT, the medication, or the illness itself, I was never entirely sure - I suspect a combination of the three. Either way his concentration was badly affected. Mycroft got him a tutor three months or so after he got home, so that he could continue with his A levels. To start with he could only manage maybe five minutes at a time, then he would simply drift off into his own head and lose track of what the tutor was saying, he found it intensely frustrating.'

'How did he manage it?'

Dominic, the psychologist he'd worked with in Elmhurst, had talked to him about memory rooms, about how to file things so that you could find them again. I think it was a technique he'd already played around with. The psychologist who came to see him at home expanded on that with him. As he expanded his methods of filing memories, so his concentration improved, they used other techniques too, and slowly but surely, it got better. It was still a problem by the time that he went to university, though.'

'He even asked about Ritalin at one point,' James Harrison said, ' and you know, I've never made the connection until now, but-

'The cocaine,' Kate said. 'You think the cocaine he used at university was an attempt to improve his concentration?'

'Possibly. And the amphetamines that he tried before that certainly could have been. It makes sense doesn't it? That he'd try to self medicate to solve the problem?'

'Of course he would,' John said with a groan. 'And coming off the medication at university, was that because of concentration problems too?'

'It was because he thought they slowed him down too much,' James said. ' he was still brilliant on them, but not as brilliant as some of his colleagues, it would appear. He couldn't stand that.'

'Stupid bastard,' John muttered, 'of course he wouldn't be able to bear anyone being cleverer than he was.'

'And the drugs?' Kate asked. 'Was that where they came in? To try to control his symptoms on his own? Self-medication again?'

'I was only peripherally involved in his drug treatment,' James said. 'But it seems likely, although I'd be careful about over simplifying it. Sherlock was an addict because he had a biological and psychological propensity to become one, and because he reached a point in his life when drugs
seemed like an answer. I'm always wary of creating excuses for addiction. In Sherlock's case, it was understandable, but that doesn't mean that it was unavoidable.'

'You were angry with him,' Kate said, picking up on his tone.

James nodded slightly, 'Yes, I suppose I was. I couldn't help but feel that so many of us had gone out on a limb for him, and it felt like a poor repayment. He could also be very manipulative - no insult intended. But after his discharge from Elmhurst he refused to see another psychiatrist, even though I was up here by then. We had telephone consultations, but it was far from ideal. When he went to university I insisted that his care be transferred to a colleague of mine in Cambridge, but he repeatedly failed to turn up for his appointment, and then would contact me to ask for repeat prescriptions of drugs - mainly lorazepam.'

Kate closed her eyes for a moment, a gesture not lost on Sarah, sitting opposite her, who asked, 'Kate? Are you okay?'

'Yes, I'm fine,' she said quickly. I just don't like to think of Sherlock putting anybody in that position, that's all.'

'I don't think that it was a conscious manipulation,' James said. 'Sherlock had huge issues with trust, don't forget, that were at least partly forged in Elmhurst. But it was a difficult situation. I didn't feel comfortable continuing to prescribe him medication for a distance, I was aware that he'd stopping taking everything apart from the lorazepam anyway. He refused to see another psychiatrist. I agreed with him that I would continue prescribing him lorazepam for as long as he continued phone consultations with me, but when he persistently avoided those, I reluctantly handed his care back to his GP.'

'And they stopped prescribing it for him?' John asked.

'So I understand!' James said. 'His GP wrote to me six months later to tell me that she'd only managed a single consultation with Sherlock - when Mycroft had called her in too see him at the house. He'd hit a particularly bad low, and had refused to leave his room for a week. She'd prescribed him lorazepam then, but he'd missed all of his follow-up appointments, so she hadn't prescribed him any more.'

So he started to acquire them from other means?

'I would imagine so.'

'You feel responsible,' Kate said, watching his face. 'Even now. You feel that this drug use was your fault.'

I wonder if I might have pushed him onto that path, yes.'

But it wasn't your fault,' Kate told him. 'You did what we're all taught to do. You gave him boundaries. He breached them. It would have been against the College of Psychiatrist's code of conduct to just continue to prescribe for him when he wasn't complying with any kind of management plan, when he was refusing to engage with you. You couldn't have done anything else.'

James nodded. 'That's what I told myself,' he said. 'That's what my colleagues told me when I discussed it with them, but still. Guilt is possibly the least logical of all human emotions.'

'I would have done the same,' Kate said. 'In your position, I would have done exactly the same.'

'As would I,' John added. 'I did a bit of psychiatry as an SHO, and as a GP it's a situation that I've
come up against time and again. You did exactly what we're all taught to do. You didn't have an
option.'

There was an awkward silence, before John asked, 'And the next time you had any contact with
Sherlock was when he was in rehab?'

'Before that. He contacted me - well Sarah, and she got me to come and talk to him, when he realised
he was out of his depth with drugs. I arranged his admission to the clinic for the detox and rehab.'

'And you were involved with his care?'

'Not officially, no. I contacted him by phone regularly, because I was aware that he was refusing to
talk to a psychiatrist there. This was before the day of dual diagnosis teams remember, before the
recognition that the combination of addiction and mental illness needed specialist management.
Sherlock wouldn't engage with anyone at the clinic. He made his views on participation in group
therapy quite clear, and then manipulated the situation to make even his attendance at group sessions
impossible. And then he tried to leave the clinic - just tried to walk out the door.'

'But they had no right to stop him, surely?' John said. 'I mean, he wasn't under a section. He had the
right to leave.'

'The clinic staff stopped him and contacted Mycroft. When he was unable to stop him, he telephoned
me to ask for my advice.'

'He wanted you to section him?'

'Yes. Or at least to arrange for it to be done locally.'

'On what basis?'

'On the basis that he was a danger to himself.'

'And was he?'

James sighed. 'I suppose that he was. I knew beyond a shadow of a doubt, that if Sherlock left that
clinic then he would be dead within six months - whether from drug use, risky living or suicide, I
couldn't say, but you get a feel for these things. He was out of control, that much was clear. And he
had no insight into the fact. In his head, his addiction had been entirely physical. He was convinced
that having been detoxed, he could withstand the urge to use again without any help, and that he
could live a life independent of his brother once he left the clinic.'

'And you didn't believe him?' John asked. 'But he had a right to try, surely? He had the right as a
competent adult to make that decision.'

'Which is what I told Mycroft. That in my opinion Sherlock had capacity, was not sectionable, and
that he should allow him to leave the clinic, leaving him the option to return home should it all fall
apart - which it inevitably would. Leave the door open to his return.'

'But Mycroft wouldn't do that?'

'No. He arranged a section assessment off his own back, via the clinic psychiatrist. They said exactly
what I had predicted - that Sherlock was not sectionable at that time. His mood was low, he was
irritable and frustrated, but he was not suicidal. He just wanted to leave. While he declined treatment
that there was nothing that they could do.'
'So why didn't Mycroft just let him go?'

James sighed. 'Mycroft Holmes' relationship with his brother is complex to say the least, as you've no doubt discovered. I think the honest truth is that he couldn't bear to let him go. To risk him destroying himself. So he went for plan B.'

A vulnerable adult declaration.'

'Exactly.'

'But on what basis? Vulnerable adults tend to be patients with learning difficulties, those who can't look after themselves. I can see that Sherlock might have been unconventional at that age, but he had the ability to look after himself if he so chose.'

'Mycroft's argument was that he wouldn't chose - that he never had. The only way that he survived college was with Mycroft's paid college staff to ensure that there was food available in Sherlock's room, to make sure that he attended meals in college, to do his washing, and above all to inform Mycroft if he shut himself in his room for more than twenty-four hours at a time. This was a twenty year old man, who had never to my knowledge set foot inside a supermarket, who didn't even know how to boil an egg, who had never used a washing machine.'

'But he could have learnt,' John said stubbornly. 'That's the difference, isn't it? He could have learnt.'

'The judge that Mycroft took the case to, disagreed. He gave him the vulnerable adult order.'

'Based partly on your psychiatric report,' Kate interjected. '

Yes,' James agreed. 'And the fact that he was on the autistic spectrum was a larger part of that than his bipolar or his drug addiction, I presume.'

'Yes.'

'Did the judge actually meet Sherlock?'

'No. It was all done on statements.'

'But that's - ' Unconventional? Yes. Illegal? Almost certainly. But it kept him safe.'

'But he still could have had capacity,' Kate said. 'He could have insisted on an independent assessment of that and left.'

'He could, but he didn't,' James said. 'And maybe that was exactly the point.'

'What do you mean?'

'I mean that Sherlock always had to try to kick against the establishment - against Mycroft in particular, but at the end of the day, he likes boundaries. He always has. At twenty he had a self-destruct button a mile wide. And that scared him. He had to be seen to try, but when he came down to it - he wanted to know that he was kept safe.'

'That's fairly complex psychology,' John said, running a hand through his hair.

'He's a complex individual,' James replied.

'Did he ever talk to you about it?'
'No. He was furious with me for my intervention. He refused to take my telephone calls. He refused to talk to me.'

'And you, Sarah?' John asked.

'He stayed in contact with me for a while - I was his last link, I think, with the support that he'd had in Elmhurst. He'd speak to me on the phone, and later via email during his time at the clinic, and for a few months afterwards. Then it just petered out. I'd get updates from Mycroft from time to time. That was about it. I haven't heard from Sherlock directly for the best part of ten years.'

'Why do you say directly?' Kate asked suddenly.

'Some journalist came sniffing round a few years back - Kitty Riley she was called. The one who wrote the big expose in the papers before Sherlock disappeared. Goodness knows how she got the information, but she seemed to think that Sherlock had been a patient here at some point. I was able to tell her with a clear conscience that wasn't the case. She didn't hang around long after that.'

And after that, there was little more to do apart from handshakes all round (and a hug for Kate and Sarah, and a request for regular updates), and expressions of gratitude from Kate and John for all that they had uncovered.

'You okay?' John asked Kate in the taxi on the way back to the hotel.

'Im fine. It's just - John do you get the feeling that we're being played?'

'How do you mean?'

'I mean all of this. This trip. Sherlock being so keen for us both to come. I can't help feeling it was less about gathering information, and more about getting us to understand.'

'Letting you know what he went through, you mean?'

Kate shook her head, 'More than that. I think it was about making sure that I knew who he was - what he did. The drugs were more of a problem than he ever let me realise, that much is clear. And he did things that he obviously wasn't proud of. He manipulated people, John. He tried to use them to get what he wanted.'

'He was an addict, Kate. It comes with the territory. It's part of the disease process, isn't it? The drive to get a fix, no matter what the cost? Don't judge him on that.'

'I'm not judging him, John. It's just - I can't help wondering why he wanted us to know.'

'Trying to push me away do you think?' Kate asked. 'Why would he do that?'

'Just a hunch. Look why don't you take some time out this afternoon? Transcribing this lot will take me hours. Why don't you head into town and go -'

'If you say shopping, I'll hit you,' Kate told him.

John laughed. 'I wouldn't dare,' he said. 'I was going to suggest that you go and find a gallery or something. Take your mind off things a bit.'

'Is he okay?' Kate asked suddenly. 'I mean, I know that we agreed that I wouldn't talk to him while we were away - that I'd let you check in with the clinic, but you'd tell me, wouldn't you? If anything
was going on.'

'He's fine, Kate,' John said firmly, feeling vaguely guilty in his attempt to convince her. But then Sherlock was fine, wasn't he? Anna had only said that Sherlock needed to talk to him in private. When Kate wasn't around. About the case - Sherlock's case. And besides, Kate needed some time out. So why did he feel as if he was deceiving her?
Chapter 44

"What am I looking at?" John asked as he stared at the image of Sherlock's evidence wall, projected onto the screen on his Macbook. Anna had told him nothing more than that Sherlock needed to talk to him, and that he should go along with what he asked.

"What do you think that you're looking at?"

'It looks like a case - but you're not working. I don't understand.'

'Engage your brain and think, John.' Sherlock sounded irritated, but his normal edge of sarcasm was missing. Whatever he was doing, he was obviously being driven to it by a compulsion outside his normal need to work.

'Zoom me in closer,' John said. And then as Anna moved the computer closer to the wall,'Oh, I see. It is a case, but it's your case. That's what you're doing. You're trying to solve it yourself.'

'Finally.'

'Move the computer closer will you, Anna? I want to talk to Sherlock.'

She did so, and Sherlock's face came into view. Pale, with dark shadows under his eyes. Anna rested the computer down on the table and John got a longer view of Sherlock, fingers drumming on his thighs, shifting slightly from one foot to the other, as he was struggling to stand still.

'You okay?' John asked.

'Fine, I'm fine. I need to find answers, John.'

'And that's what me and Kate have been doing - finding you answers.'

'Too slow. I can't wait.'

'Sherlock, what is this? What's changed. I thought that you wanted the whole thing in once chunk - together, not piecemeal.'

Sherlock shook his head, 'I can't wait, John. I need to know what happened - everything that you have. I want you to go through the wall with me and fill in the gaps. That's the only way to piece it together, to work out what questions remain, what further evidence we need.'

He was definitely agitated. John had seen him driven on cases before, but this was different. There was a desperation in his voice that John had rarely heard before. He wondered where this would lead, why Anna seemed to be going along with this, why they hadn't sedated him yet.

'Why don't you want Kate to know?' he asked calmly.

'Because she'd try to stop me,'

'How do you know that I won't?'

'Because you know that it's the right thing to do,' Sherlock said, sounding irritated again. Then, 'John - I need your help with this. Please?'

'Where's Anna?' John asked, and Anna came into view behind Sherlock. 'It's fine, John,' she said,
and he found her calm demeanour oddly reassuring. 'Ed Harris is aware, and thinks we should go with it. Sherlock is right. He needs answers, and he needs a way to occupy himself.'

John wasn't sure that occupying himself was an accurate description of what Sherlock was doing. But he trusted Anna, and he trusted Ed, and if they wanted him to help Sherlock, then who was he to argue?

'Now if you've quite finished your analysis of my current psychiatric state, can we get back to this wall?' Sherlock snapped.

And so for the next three hours, John talked himself hoarse, going through all of the evidence that he had uncovered, once piece at a time. Minimising the Skype screen to pull up documents and email them across to Sherlock, who looked at them on a second computer, in order to allow John a continued, uninterrupted view of the wall.

He was interrupted by a soft tap on the door, and he slammed shut the lid of his laptop feeling guilty as hell as he opened the door to Kate, back from an afternoon wandering round the city.

Five minutes later, he was back at the computer, having agreed to meet Kate in the hotel lobby in an hour to go out for dinner. Sherlock didn't even seem to have noticed his absence. He was still working on the wall, rearranging pieces of paper, scribbling a few lines onto one of them, discarding another. Continuing to watch him on the screen, John pulled out his mobile phone and called the clinic's number. Over the Skype connection, he could just make out the knock on the door and the quiet murmur of conversation as one of the other nurses, Chloe perhaps if she was working, came to tell Anna that she had a telephone call, and took over from her in the room. He heard the quiet click of the door as Anna left the room, then less than ninety seconds later, she was on the phone.

'Anna, it's John Watson.'

To her credit she didn't sound surprised, and didn't ask him why he hadn't simply talked to her over the Skype network.

'What's going on?' John asked calmly.

'He's having a mixed episode,' Anna explained. 'Triggered, we think by the memories that he found in his memory palace.'

'Has he actually talked about that? About what he found.'

'Not directly, no. But it's fairly obvious that the abuse was more than physical. He's struggling to come to terms with that. Work seems to be his way of dealing with it.'

'So - what, we just go along with it?'

'For now, yes.'

'So what do I do about Kate? I've said I'll meet her in an hour. If I don't turn up, then she'll know something is going on, but Sherlock has asked me not to tell her. How do I work that one in?'

'Ask him,' Anna replied. 'Although he's gone a bit silent, hasn't he? Does he do this?'

'For hours sometimes.'

'There you go then. He might not even notice that you've gone.'
'What are you going to do? Your shift ends soon doesn't it - do you think he'll be okay with someone else?'

'He knows the night staff. He trusts them. I'll stay for a while, but -'

'I know, I know. You have your own life too, and you can't stay with him all night.'

'No, it's not that. It's just - there are rules, John. For our own protection.'

So Anna wanted to stay with Sherlock - because she cared, but the powers that be wouldn't allow it. That was interesting. He'd never pegged Anna for one to keep to arbitrary rules, and there was an uneasiness in her voice that he couldn't ignore.

'Are they listening?' he asked quietly.

'It's not the CIA John,' she said, her voice sounding amused now. 'Sometimes there's a conflict between what you want to do as a human being and what you know that you should do as a professional, that's all.'

'What do you think is going to happen? Do you think that he'll crack?'

'Perhaps. If he doesn't get the answers that he needs. He's frustrated, and what he's doing doesn't always seem logical. I can't help but wonder where all this is going.'

'He's always like that,' John told her. 'Usually I can't work out what the hell he's doing, and then - there it is. The solution, and I rarely have any idea how he got to it.'

'Let's hope that the same is true this time,' Anna said. 'Because if ever there was a case that he needed to solve, it's this one.'

'I'm worried for him, Anna,' John said.

'Don't be,' Anna said. 'He's safe here, John. Whatever happens, we can deal with it, but this is about letting him do what he feels that he needs to do. It's about supporting him through that process, letting him regain some degree of control over his life, over his past. It's about helping him to make sense of it.'

'And if he can't?'

'He will, John. Eventually. People always do. The only question is how long it will take, and how he will react to the answers that he finds.'
Chapter 45

Anna found the calm that followed almost uncanny.

Sherlock returned to his room and pushed the desk over to the window, allowing him to look out over the garden as he worked. The evidence wall had been taken down as he had requested the previous evening, but he had asked for the laptop back, so that he could begin the work of writing up the case.

He started at the beginning, compiling a dossier of his life as he had said that he would. Looking at what he was typing over his shoulder before he batted her away, Anna saw that he was typing in strict chronological order; date, times, places, pulling in fragments of interviews, cross-referencing to other documents, inserting photographs, but all in a slow and measured way, with none of his previous break-neck speed. He ate and drank when prompted by Anna, took his medication without protest, and that night sank into sleep without the need for sleeping tablets.

When Ed Harris visited him that afternoon, he seemed distracted, and refused to leave his room to meet him in the interview room as had been the pattern for the last few days. When the psychiatrist visited him in his room, Sherlock continued typing, apparently completely absorbed in the task at hand.

'It's important,' he replied when Ed asked him if he could stop what he was doing to discuss the events of the previous day. 'I need to organise this.'

'In order to organise your thoughts?'

'Perhaps,' Sherlock replied, without turning round, staring at the screen, his hands suspended above the keyboard for a moment before he worked out where to insert yet another photograph of the house that he had grown up in.

'What about your mind palace, Sherlock?'

Sherlock waved that idea away with a sweep of his hand. 'That's unreliable,' he said dismissively. 'The walls shift, rooms become locked, some data has been lost entirely. I need it in hard format.'

'In case you forget again?'

'Perhaps.'

'Do you find it easier to process the data when it's in hard format in front of you?'

Sherlock remained silent, continuing to type.

'You discovered some hard truths about your father last night, about yourself. Would you like to talk about that?'

'Noooo,' Sherlock said, sounding even more distracted.

'Because it's too soon?'

'Because I'm busy,' Sherlock replied, flipping into a different document.

'Then I will leave you to it,' Ed said, an edge of amusement to his voice as he retreated to the other side of the room to talk to Anna.
'Could you do that outside, please?' Sherlock asked tersely, as he continued to type. 'Your presence is distracting. If you feel the need to talk about me then please do it elsewhere.'

'Leave him to it?' Anna asked, when they had retreated to Ed Harris' office, leaving Mark to watch Sherlock.

'He has his own agenda,' Ed replied. 'Does that concern you?'

'I'm not used to patients being so - withdrawn at this stage of their treatment, I suppose,' Anna said frowning.

'I told you he wouldn't be straight-forward.'

'He's certainly not that. And the rudeness? He's never been rude like that before.'

'Ah -that is pure Sherlock Holmes, I'm afraid. He doesn't feel the need for social niceties. Kate warned me about that early on.'

'Autistic trait,' Anna said thoughtfully.

'I don't think so,' Ed Harris replied. ' it would be easy to discount it as that, wouldn't it? I even wondered about narcissistic personality disorder for a time, but I think it's a protective mechanism. He does it to regain control, he's told me as much. His mind comes first, Anna, the case comes first - always. Being abrupt, rude even, often obtains him what he wants, and more to the point, it pushes people away, as it did today. It stops interruptions, it stops distractions, and it stops emotions, and the interference of others disturbing the purity of what he is doing.'

'So we support him in what he feels he needs to do?'

'Absolutely, but I would set limits if he will allow you to. You have formed a good working relationship with Sherlock, Anna. He listens to you, he respects you also, I think. Try to get him to keep it calm, and not push himself back into hypomania. Allow him to work, but try to get him to go outside once a day, get him to do some exercise in the gym or the pool even, persuade him that that will help his cognitive processes. Ensure that he eats and drinks and sleeps. In short set the pattern for when he returns to his normal life.'

'Do you think he will agree to that?'

'There's only one way to try.'

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The next few days developed a pattern. Sherlock would wake early, shower, switch on the laptop and sit down to work, often before the early shift had even arrived at half seven. He would eat and drink what was put before him. At about half eleven he would stand up and stretch, and ask to go outside. Once outside he would pace round the garden, muttering to himself, but tell Anna to go away when she tried to walk next to him. 'You're distracting me,' he would tell her. I'm trying to work something out.'

On his return to his room he would sit back at the desk and start typing furiously. Stopping to eat didn't appear to be an option, and so advised by Kate, Anna started silently leaving sandwiches beside him at lunchtime, which he ate as if unaware of what he was doing. Cups of tea also disappeared the same way.

At about half two in the afternoon he would shut the laptop, climb onto the bed, and fall asleep
within minutes, all without speaking a word. He would sleep for a couple of hours, wake, stretch, and return to the desk where he would work until about seven when he would stop, shut the laptop, request the television be turned on, and sit in the armchair in the corner of the room, watching it for several hours, still without speaking.

He was mono-syllabic even with Kate, meeting her enquiries about how he was, his work, and everything else with, 'Fine,' before turning his attention back to the television. She had to content herself with sitting with him in silence, but when she asked him if he wanted her to go, he simply said, 'Don't,' and reached out for her hand.

Knowing Sherlock, Kate took that as enough reassurance that he was just doing what he always did - working things through in his own way, in his own time. He couldn't talk because his mind was distracted elsewhere, she realised. Even when he was watching television, he would sometimes frown and look away as if trying to work something out. He was still working on the minutiae of the case, the television was just background noise to him.'

'It's almost eerie,' she told John that evening when she got back. 'He's so calm, so controlled, I've never seen him like this in a case before.'

'Is that the medication do you think?'

'Maybe. I hope so - or maybe I don't. I'm not sure I could cope with him like this all the time, he's just so -silent.'

'Ed says we're best to leave him to it. He's been through a hell of a lot in the last few weeks, Kate, you know that. He says he needs time to process it on his own before he verbalises it.'

'Did you show him the note?' Kate asked. Francoise Marchant had contacted John a few days previously. She had gone through her old letters and found something that she had claimed to have forgotten, or rather Kate thought, had been unsure whether she wanted to admit to. A letter from Adrienne Holmes dated two weeks before her death when she expressed her fear of returning to her old life, to her controlling husband. It didn't directly express suicidal ideation, but it stated that her concern for Sherlock and his future was the only thing that would make her return. It was a letter that spoke of the desire for escape. On first reading it suggested a desire to leave England permanently, to relocate to France perhaps, and Francoise had read it as that. But in the knowledge of subsequent events, there was a darker meaning that could not be missed. It was a letter of intent - and an apology. If there had been any doubt before about the cause of Adrienne's death, the letter removed them.

'Yes, I gave it to him this afternoon,' John said. 'He just read it, nodded and handed it to Anna asking her to get it scanned in, all without reacting.

'What's he up to, John?'

'Working; sorting out his head - you think there's something else?'

'I don't know, John. He just seems so - focused,'

'You say that as if it's a bad thing.'

'It should be done now, shouldn't it? He's worked it out, he knows what happened, he's got the answers that he wanted.'

'He never has all the answers, Kate. You know that. He just likes us to think that he does.'

'So what - we just leave him to it?"
'Until he asks for our help, yes. He's doing well, Kate. He's getting better, whatever he is doing is working. Maybe it's time to stop worrying about him?'

'Maybe,' Kate replied, trying to sound more convinced than she felt.
Sherlock’s hands had been firmly buried in his hair for the last ten minutes as he paced from one end of his wall to the other and back, trying to piece all of the data together. Somewhere among all of this information there was an answer, there had to be, but the theories kept slipping out of his brain before he had time to consider them. Irritating didn't begin to cover it. He wanted to blame the drugs for his inability to concentrate, to hold onto his thoughts, but logically he knew that this was something else. His mind was racing fast, too fast for logical thought. So did he need more drugs, or less? He no longer knew.

Trying to force himself to focus he returned to the beginning of his wall. Childhood. The answers had to lie there. He traced the photographs on the wall with his finger. His childhood home, the forced family portrait when he must have been - what twelve? Already looking detached, already looking as if he would rather be anywhere other than there. Then a photograph of his boarding house at Eton, and next to it the standard school portrait with his thirteen year old self looking self-conscious in that ridiculous uniform. And below it - something else entirely. A new photograph, one that he didn't recognise, one that he hadn't put on the wall himself, that hadn't been there ten minutes previously. How was that possible? He vaguely registered the presence of a third person in the room, standing back, observing him. He found their presence irritating. He contemplated turning to confront them, but there was something about the boy in the photograph that made it almost impossible for him to wrench himself away. The boy looked ten or eleven. Pre-pubescent certainly. He didn't recognise him, but the look in the boy's eyes made his blood run cold, and the nausea rise from his stomach. Feeling oddly light-headed, he turned round fast, too fast - the movement made him stagger slightly, and then Anna was there, pushing him towards the bed, making him put his head down until the room swam back into focus, and then there was - Mycroft. Of course, Mycroft, watching his every reaction.

He wanted to shout at him, to tell him to piss off, to tell him that he didn't want him here, but the truth was - he needed him here. Because in his hand was a brown envelope, and in that envelope, he knew, were the answers that he needed. From that envelope had undoubtably come the photograph that now adorned his wall.

'Who is he?' he asked, without bothering to greet his brother or question his presence in his room.

'Who was he, you mean.'

'He's dead?'

'He is. Drug overdose at the age of nineteen. Let's just say that his life wasn't an entirely pleasant or blameless one.'

'Who was he?'
'His name was Daniel Brierley.'

Sherlock stood up slowly, and walked back to the picture. 'He came and helped out in the stables sometimes,' he said finally. 'On the estate. I remember him with the horses. He used to help muck out and groom them at the weekends.'

'His father was one of the groundsmen,' Mycroft told him. 'More fencing and coppicing than gardening, although he turned his hand to that too on occasion. They lived in a cottage on the edge of the estate.'

'By the old chapel. I remember. Why is his photo here, Mycroft?'

'What is the one question that you can't answer?' Mycroft asked him.

'Why my father did what he did,' Sherlock said quietly, fingers still tracing the photo, back to the room. Avoiding eye contact.

'That is more than one question because he did more than one thing,' Mycroft told him. 'But this photograph holds one of the answers, I think.'

'You did some investigating of your own,' Sherlock said.

'I merely helped fill in the gaps in John and Kate's investigations,' Mycroft said.

Anna had retreated to the corner of the room, watching the siblings closely, ready to step in if needed.

'Your memory loss is patchy, Sherlock,' Mycroft told him. 'Even after Elmhurst you would claim to have no memory of events that you had remembered only a few months before.'

'What are you saying?'

'I'm saying that you have the answers. You just choose not to go looking for them.'

Sherlock turned away, and Anna watched the tension grow in his shoulders, his clenched hands, and knew that he was remembering what he had uncovered the previous day.

'Did you know, Mycroft? Did you know what our father was doing to me?'

'I suspected that he was abusing you in some way, yes. I never had any definitive proof. When he started to beat you, I chose to believe that was the extent of it.'

'It wasn't.'

'Apparently not. Although you are the only one who can say what happened with any degree of certainty. Did he -'

'Bugger me?' Sherlock turning to look at his brother. 'Among other things, yes. Thank you for asking,' he said, watching his brothers face for a reaction.

Mycroft's jaw tightened slightly, but other than that he held his brother's gaze, concealing his emotions with habitual ease.

'I didn't know,' he said. 'If I had, I would have tried to do something. I would have tried to make him
'Would you?'

'Yes, Sherlock, I would.'

Full marks to Mycroft, Anna thought. Not only had he finally got Sherlock to verbalise what had happened to him, but he now met Sherlock's analytical gaze and in the staring competition that ensued, he obviously wasn't going to look away first. Sherlock was the one who finally broke the stale-mate, looking away, back to the wall, back to the photo of Daniel Brierley.

He stared at it, eyes narrowed, trying to remember. 'I came home for an exeat weekend in the Michelmas term,' he said. 'Walked into the house unannounced. This boy - Daniel - he was coming out of our father's study. My father said that he had been tutoring him.'

'And you chose to believe him?' Mycroft said, echoing his own tone from earlier.

'Maybe I wanted to believe him,' Sherlock said. 'How did you find out about this?'

'I asked the right questions,' Mycroft said. Then at Sherlock's scathing look, 'John wasn't asking the right questions, Sherlock. Something must have happened to provoke Father into that degree of anger towards you. That was the worst beating that he had ever given you by far. I started by looking at the old staff lists from the estates ledger - it listed names and wages. I looked for people who had left the estate's employment around that time. Pete Brierley, Daniel's father, left our employment a few days after he allegedly found you injured under that tree.'

'He was the one that found me?'

'Yes. He was also the one who claimed to have seen you throw yourself out of the tree. He claimed that you'd said something about being able to fly. Given your mental state in the preceding few days, it wasn't a difficult cognitive leap to imagine that might have been possible.'

'My mental state? I thought everything started afterwards, after I got injured.'

Mycroft shook his head slowly. 'You'd been withdrawn for months,' he said. 'Prolonged grief reaction, the school doctor had said. You'd been offered counselling, which you'd refused. The house staff later reported that you'd been agitated for the few days leading up to your injuries - pacing round the house, muttering to yourself.'

'I was thinking aloud,' Sherlock snapped.

'So you do remember?'

'A little. I was trying to work something out, something important. I just can't remember what,' he sounded irritated by this. 'What else did Daniel's father have to say. Did he know about the abuse?'

'The very question that I asked him when I went to see him a few days ago. He says no. His eyes told a different story. I think that he suspected, but chose to look the other way. The implications of asking the right questions were too high. His job, his home, Daniel's future. Daniel seemed - happy with the tutoring arrangement, he said. He saw no reason to interfere with that.'

'He sold his son to our father for job stability and the chance of a place for his son at public school?'

'Parents have turned a blind eye for less. He chose not to go up against an adversary whom he knew he could not hope to win against, Sherlock. Can you blame him, when he had no concrete proof?'
'I went to see him,' Sherlock said slowly. 'I went to see Daniel's father. I tried to warn him - to tell him to keep Daniel away from my father. He got angry with me - said that I was jealous because my father was paying attention to another child. Threw me out of the house.'

'He told me. Said that you were babbling like an idiot about our father being a bad influence and how he should keep his son away from him if he wanted to keep him safe. He said that you weren't making any sense. Wouldn't go into any specifics. He said that he asked you to leave and you started yelling at him, so he threw you out of the house, phoned Father, told him that he was concerned about your mental health.'

'And he - what, decided to punish me for interfering?'

'Not immediately, no. The visit to Daniel's father was the day before your alleged fall from the tree. That afternoon, the housekeeper reports hearing shouting from Father's study. From what she could hear of his side of the conversation through the door, she said it sounded as if he had caught had been going through his papers, trying to find something. You were yelling at him, she couldn't hear what you were saying.'

'Did he hit me?'

'Just once on that occasion by the sound of it. The housekeeper reports you running out of the house with a very red cheek, and a cut above your eye.'

'What did I do?'

'Piecing things together, you did what any respectable teenager would have done. You went AWOL for a while, then turned up at the village pub several hours later and drank yourself under the table with a considerable amount of cider. The Landlord there chose to turn a blind eye to the fact that you were underage, but again reported that you were babbling and talking nonsense about conspiracies. When you finally passed out, they called the house and the chauffeur came and took you home.'

'What did I find, Mycroft? What did I find in his study?'

'I don't know. I'm not convinced that you found anything. Your presence in his study would have been enough. You had started to ask questions, questions are always dangerous, especially for a man with as many secrets as our father.'

Sherlock, paused considered and then asked, 'Did he arrange our mother's death?'

'The evidence certainly points in that direction, yes. We will never know for sure. He covered his tracks too well to enable anyone to prove it definitively, even now.'

'Did I find out about it?'

'It was a large part of your so called delusions after your injury, so it seems likely that you had uncovered something. You never mentioned Daniel, but you apparently repeatedly called Father a murderer. However, as you also accused him of being in league with the devil and a member of an IRA terrorist cell, among other things, you can see why your concerns were dismissed.'

'So what happened next?'

'You tell me.'

'I can't remember, Mycroft, I told you.'
'And I told you, years ago, that no memory is ever truly forgotten. We simply lose the ability to find our way back to them.'

'You want me to go back into my memory palace?'

'Yes.'

'Now?'

'Yes.'

Anna stood watching them, a deep feeling of uneasiness creeping up. Sherlock was exhausted, Mycroft was far from his usual unflustered self. She felt that she ought to stop this, and yet at the same time she knew that they had come too far for that.

'Sherlock, this is your choice,' she told him quietly, but he didn't even acknowledge her as he raised his hands to his forehead, and she could almost see him flicking through the memories.

It took less than ten minutes. 'I didn't ask my father about Daniel,' he said quietly, as he opened his eyes again. 'I couldn't - I didn't want to bring up what he'd done to me, in case - I didn't want it to start again. I said that I was looking for information about Mother's death. He got angry, he hit me, I ran out of the house. That was it. But I think it was enough. That was what rattled him - the idea that I could have worked it out.'

'The next day I went looking for answers again. Father was in his study, I went to the stables, looking for Daniel. It was the school holidays, I knew that he'd be there. I tried to talk to him, tried to persuade him that he had to tell someone what was going on - not his father, someone else. A teacher from school, the local vicar, the police, anyone. I said that I'd go with him. He got upset, said that he didn't know what I was talking about, that nothing had happened. He ran off into the woods, I followed him. What I didn't realise was that he was running to where his father was working.'

'Pete Brierley attacked you?' Mycroft asked.

'Yes. Ironic isn't it? He saw me chasing his son, I tried to explain to him what had been going on, but he just lost it. Accused me of pouring poison into his son's ears, said that my father had told him the extent to which I had tried to go in the past to implicate him in my injuries, told me I was fucked up and that I needed to be taught a lesson in respect, and then he just - lost it. Daniel had run off by this point. I tried to defend myself, but he just kept hitting me, again and again. I thought that he was going to kill me.'

'Which makes sense,' Mycroft said. 'The Housekeeper reports that Father was in his study all day. He took a sequence of phone calls and called for coffee at regular intervals. The perfect alibi. Pete Brierley's attack on you was calculated, I think. Father certainly covered up for him, corroborated his story of you throwing yourself out of that tree by describing your irrational state the previous evening. Nobody thought to question that version of events, not even me.'

'Did Daniel ever talk about what had happened to him?'

'Only once. He mentioned a history of sexual abuse to his psychologist at a young offenders institution he ended up in at fifteen for pulling a knife on a dealer - he never said who the perpetrator was though.'

'I heard them,' Sherlock said quietly. 'The day before. Father had taken him to the outbuilding he used to take me to. I heard them in their - father's voice and then Daniel's, and then...'
He broke off, and sank down on the bed, burrowing his hands in his hair. 'I should have stopped him,' he said. 'I should have gone to the police. I should have...'

Anna went over and knelt in front of him, hand on his arm. 'It wasn't your fault, Sherlock. You were a child yourself. You were scared. Your father was the one who holds the responsibility for this, not you.'

'Were there others?' Sherlock asked, looking up at Mycroft.

'It seems likely, yes.'

'And that's why -'

'Why he wanted you locked up indefinitely. Almost certainly. What he had done, Sherlock, was enough to both destroy his reputation, and to lock him away for many, many years. He couldn't risk that.'

Sherlock stared at the ground for a long time, before quietly saying, 'Thank you, Mycroft.'

Mycroft nodded at his brother. 'I'll say goodnight then,' he said, and then when he was almost at the door, 'I'm sorry, Sherlock. For what it's worth.'

'For what?'

'For failing to protect you.'

'It wasn't your job to protect me.'

'Nevertheless. I should have done it.'

Chapter End Notes

Apologies yet again for the ridiculously long hiatus, and thank you to everyone for sticking with the story!

The good news is - it's finally finished. 9 chapters to go and I should be posting the whole lot in the next 2 weeks.

If you want to know what happened to Sherlock in Elmhurst, then have a look at The Box if you haven't already read it.

Thank you for reading and reviewing - your comments are what keeps me writing.
Chapter 47

Sherlock sat there frozen in position on the edge of the bed, struggling to process what he had uncovered with thought processes that were becoming progressively more confused. He was aware of Anna, trying to talk to him, but her words made no sense. He was aware of the cool slide of a needle into his arm, of her and other nurses helping him into bed and then there was just emptiness and sleep.

He woke later that night, stumbling to the bathroom to relieve his aching bladder without communication, grateful for the assistance of the nurse stationed once again at the desk in the corner of the room. Whatever they had given him had made his legs feel like cotton wool, and he fell asleep again as soon as he had been helped back into bed. Sleep, he wished that he could sleep forever, switch it off, switch it off, this infernal brain of his, and the memories that now uncovered, kept replaying themselves, over and over in his head.

Chloe was there when he woke, not Anna, and he accepted the sedation that she offered him gratefully, swallowing the tablets down in silence, and lying down again, waiting for sleep to take him.

When he woke for the third time, the light outside the window suggested that it was early afternoon. There was a quiet presence sitting by the bed. She radiated calm and reassurance, and he wanted desperately for her to be real. But he had told Anna not to call her, not to allow her to come. And so he lay there and watched her, and waited for this hypnagogic illusion to pass. Instead, it talked to him.

'Hullo,' said Kate's voice, with a touch of amusement. 'Whatever they've been giving you, it must be good. You've been asleep for hours.'

'You're real?'

'Of course, I'm real. Did you really think that I would stay away once I'd worked out what you were up to?'

He pushed himself to a sitting position. 'I'm sorry, Kate,' he said, unable to tear his eyes away from her face. She was real. Kate, his Kate, the one person who he knew would accept him unconditionally. The person he had tried to push away by showing her who he had been, before the cases, before John and his contagious morality, before he had found a way through the anger.

'For sending me away? It didn't work you know.'

'No?'

She smiled then, and he felt himself relax. She wasn't angry, she understood. Of course she did. And then she came and sat on the bed next to him, and he slowly leant forward and rested his head on her shoulder, and she held him tight, as if she would never let him go.

Safe, he felt safe. And he felt understood, and loved, and accepted.

'I needed you to know,' he said. 'I needed you to know who I used to be.'

'You were ill, Sherlock,' she told him, one hand resting in his curls, cradling his head in her palm like a child's. 'And confused, and damaged, and angry. I never got that before. You were angry at your
father, and at the world because he was part of it. And you wanted to tear yourself apart because you had no other way of dealing with it. And when Mycroft took the drugs away, you replaced them with the adrenaline kick of cases - and dangerous situations.'

'You're calling me an adrenaline junkie?' he asked, pulling away slightly.

'Takes one to know one,' she told him. 'Sorry, I know you don't like me psychoanalysing you. You okay?'

'I'm getting there,' he said, considering her face for a long moment. And then he pulled her close again, and wondered how he could ever, ever have thought that sending her away was a solution.

'I'm glad that you're here, Kate,' he said.

'I'm glad that I'm here too. Did you find what you were looking for?'

'Yes.'

'Do you want to tell me?'

'You already know, Kate. You always were a dreadful liar.'

'I don't know for sure. I just -'

'Worked it out? Of course, you did. How long have you known?'

'Since you got ill, I think. Those nightmares - the ones about your father. I tried hard to think it was just the physical abuse, but it didn't make sense, it didn't explain why you kept pushing people away.'

'Until I met you.'

'Why was that? Why was I different - and John? You didn't push him away either.'

'I don't know. John - I needed him. To work, I needed him. And he accepted me - I don't know why. He just - gave that nod of his, and I knew that whatever I threw at him, he would cope with it, He didn't criticise me, he didn't try to change me, he just accepted me, as I was.'

'And me?'

'You, Kate?' he said seriously. 'You knew me. From the first day we met, you knew me. You understood without questioning, and logically, I will never be able to work out how you did that.'

'I saw you,' she said softly.

'Yes, you did.'

'And I knew that I had found - something,' she said. 'I didn't know what it was, but I knew that it was important.'

'You knew that I was broken.'

'I knew that you were complex - that's not the same. I knew that you were brilliant, I knew that you were dangerous, I knew that you pushed everybody away, I didn't care.'

'You took some persuading, Kate Watson.'
'No, I didn't. Not really. Call yourself a detective, Sherlock Holmes? I was never going to walk away, not really.'

He pulled her close again, and felt for the first time in a long time - not happiness, but contentment. Safety, security. 'Marry me, Kate,' he whispered into her ear, and felt her smile into his cheek in response.

'Not yet,' she said. 'Not until you're well. Ask me again in three months, once you're out of here and life is getting back to normal. If that's still what you want, then we'll see.'

He held her close for a long time, before releasing her to look round the room. 'Where's Anna?' he asked.

'She's giving us some time alone.' Kate told him.

'You mean, she's watching us from the monitor room,' Sherlock said, giving the camera in the corner of the room a little wave.

'Hey,' Kate said, turning his face towards hers, not liking the way his eyes were darting suspiciously round the room. 'Don't do this, Sherlock. They're here to help you, you know that.'

'I need to go home, Kate,' he told her bluntly. 'I need to get out of here.'

She hesitated, knowing that any rational answer was likely to spark anger.

Her need to reply was thankfully interrupted by Anna's arrival in the room. 'Everything okay in here?' she asked.

'Fine,' Sherlock snapped. 'Kate was just trying to find a way to tell me why I need to stay here and not come home.'

'You're not angry at Kate,' Anna told him quietly.

Sherlock stared at her for a moment, and from where she was sitting next to him on the bed, Kate could feel the tension in every muscle, and then suddenly he sagged, let out a sigh of exasperation and flung himself back on the bed, hands coming up to grip the sides of his head in frustration.

'I can't get you home, not today, but I can let you go for a walk outside if you want. It's cold out there, but it might help clear your head.'

Sherlock nodded. 'Can you clear the wall?' He asked abruptly, indicating his wall of information hidden behind the sheet. 'I just - I want it gone.'

'If that's what you want.'

'It is. Have the photos and the documents scanned will you? And I'll need a laptop, a proper laptop to work on. I need to write it up.'

'Your case?' Kate asked.

'Of course my case, Kate.'

'In case you forget again?'

'So that I don't have to tell anyone what happened. Not you, not John, not Ed. You all need to know, I accept that, but I'd rather you read it than I had to put it into words.'
He looked away, staring at the sheet as if he could see through it, and swallowed hard. 'Just get it done, Anna, will you?'

'Of course,' she told him.

...

It was cold outside, but Sherlock's hand remained firmly in Kate's as they walked across the grass towards the bench at the far end of the gardens, out of sight of the buildings.

'Better?' she asked after they had been sitting there for a while.

'What makes you so sure, Kate?' He asked.

'So sure of what?'

'So sure that I'm worth saving?'

'Because I know you,' she said, giving his hand a squeeze. 'All of you. You're a good man, Sherlock Holmes, whatever you may believe.'

'My father-'

'Wasn't a good man, no,' she told him. 'But you're not him, Sherlock. You could never be him. Look at what you've achieved, what you've done with your life.'

He shook his head slightly.

'Genetics - is that what you're worried about? Psychopathy is inherited, if that's what we're talking about, but it's not a hundred percent, nothing is, not even schizophrenia. You are not a psychopath, Sherlock.'

'Then what am I?'

'You are Sherlock Holmes.'

'And who is that?'

'You know who you are.'

'No I don't, Kate, not anymore. I used to think that I knew before - before all of this. But now? I'm not so sure.'

He took a deep breath and closed his eyes, tilting his head up towards the weak November sunlight as if it could heal him somehow.

'You are the same person that you were when I met you,' she told him quietly. 'That hasn't changed. Understanding why you are how you are, how your personality was shaped, that doesn't change the core of you. It just helps you to understand.'

'Damaged.'

'We're all damaged, though, aren't we? If you want to put it into those terms. I prefer to think of it as being shaped by our past experiences - honed by adversity. Look at me. You can personality type me beautifully via attachment and parenting theories, if that's what you believe. You can say that the way I allowed myself to be treated by David was because my upbringing had made me too
compliant, too selfless, too willing to accept that I might be to blame. Did that make me a helpless victim? No. Was I prepared to remain in that role for the next of my life? Absolutely not.'

'You got tough, Kate,' Sherlock said as his hand crept into hers. 'Is that what you'd have me believe? That you being here with me trying to show me a way forward isn't an act of selflessness yet again?'

'It's absolutely selfish,' she told him solemnly. 'I want you home and well. I want back the life that we had. I want to be able to start looking towards the future instead of spending our lives dealing with the past - both of our pasts. But it's not that simple.'

'Demons, Kate. There are always demons.'

'Yes there are, but I told you a long time ago that we would fight them together.'

They sat in silence for a while, before she said, 'You sent me away. You tried to shut me out.'

'I had to.'

'Why?'

'Because I couldn't do what I needed to do with you here?'

'You could have just told me what you were planning. You could have talked to me about it.'

'You would have tried to stop me - consciously or unconsciously you would have some that.'

Kate shook her head slightly, trying to understand.

'I had to be logical, Kate. I had to have the space to do that.'

'You had to fight your own demons.'

'If you like, yes.'

'So what now?'

'Now? I'm not so sure. I need to finish the case, I think. I need to write it up, document it. I can't talk about this, so I need to put it into a form that everyone can see - you, John, Ed Harris. Mycroft too. It's his story too after all.'

'He called me, you know.'

'Mycroft?'

'Yes. He called me this morning. Suggested that I might like to cut short my trip and come back to see you. I was already on the train by that point.'

'What did he say to that?'

'He said, 'Good,' and then hung up.'

'What a mess,' Sherlock muttered. 'How do you clean this one up, Kate? How do you put this right?'

'You talk about it,' she told him. 'You stop the poison spreading down the generations any further. You can't change the past, but you can alter your perception of it. You can try to stop it happening to others.'
She felt his fingers tighten in hers, 'What is it?' She asked.

'There were others, Kate,' he told her. 'Other boys, other boys that my father-

'That he abused?' Kate asked, and she felt him tense, then he pulled his hand free of hers, so that he could bury both hands in his hair, leaning forward, so that his elbows were supported on his knees, rocking slightly.

Anna, sitting on a bench a little way off registered the movement and looked at Kate in question to see if she needed help, but Kate shook her head at her.

'You were terrified of him, Sherlock,' she told him. 'It's not your fault. It wasn't your job to save them.'

'I never said it was logical,' he said as he sat up again.

'And you can't bear that,'

'Emotion, Kate,' he told her. 'It complicates things. I've spent most of my life trying to excise it from my life, and now it's all that seems to drive me. Guilt, anger, despair. I just want - I wish I could just erase it all out of my head, reset my brain back to some kind of rational baseline.'

'Have you thought about it? About ECT?'

'Of course I've thought about it. It's a quick fix isn't it? A way to reset the neuro-transmitters and the neuro-modulatory circuits. I've read the literature, I've looked at the trials. It works. For most people it works.'

'But you won't do it?

'No, I won't do it. Not now, not ever. Where is the logic in that?'

'It doesn't have to be logical, Sherlock,' she told him.

'So I am discovering. Let's go back in,' he said abruptly, getting up and striding back over the grass at a pace that had both Anna and Kate almost running to catch up with him.
Anna found the calm that followed almost uncanny.

Sherlock returned to his room and pushed the desk over to the window, allowing him to look out over the garden as he worked. The evidence wall had been taken down as he had requested the previous evening, but he had asked for the laptop back so that he could begin the work of writing up the case.

He started at the beginning, compiling a dossier of his life as he had said that he would. Looking at what he was typing over his shoulder before he batted her away, Anna saw that he was typing in strict chronological order; date, times, places, pulling in fragments of interviews, cross-referencing to other documents, inserting photographs, but all in a slow and measured way, with none of his previous break-neck speed. He ate and drank when prompted by Anna, took his medication without protest, and that night sank into sleep without the need for sleeping tablets.

When Ed Harris visited him that afternoon, he seemed distracted and refused to leave his room to meet him in the interview room as had been the pattern for the last few days. When the psychiatrist visited him in his room, Sherlock continued typing, apparently completely absorbed in the task at hand.

'It's important,' he replied when Ed asked him if he could stop what he was doing to discuss the events of the previous day. 'I need to organise this.'

'In order to organise your thoughts?'

'Perhaps,' Sherlock replied, without turning round, staring at the screen, his hands suspended above the keyboard for a moment before he worked out where to insert yet another photograph of the house that he had grown up in.

'What about your mind palace, Sherlock?'

Sherlock waved that idea away with a sweep of his hand. 'That's unreliable,' he said dismissively. 'The walls shift, rooms become locked, some data has been lost entirely. I need it in hard format.'

'In case you forget again?'

'Perhaps.'

'Do you find it easier to process the data when it's in hard format in front of you?'

Sherlock remained silent, continuing to type.

'You discovered some hard truths about your father last night, about yourself. Would you like to talk about that?'

'Noooo,' Sherlock said, sounding even more distracted.

'Because it's too soon?'

'Because I'm busy,' Sherlock replied, flipping into a different document.

'Then I will leave you to it,' Ed said, an edge of amusement to his voice as he retreated to the other side of the room to talk to Anna.
'Could you do that outside, please?' Sherlock asked tersely, as he continued to type. 'Your presence is distracting. If you feel the need to talk about me then please do it elsewhere.'

'Leave him to it?' Anna asked when they had retreated to Ed Harris' office, leaving Mark to watch Sherlock.

'He has his own agenda,' Ed replied. 'Does that concern you?'

'I'm not used to patients being so - withdrawn at this stage of their treatment, I suppose,' Anna said frowning.

'I told you he wouldn't be straightforward.'

'He's certainly not that. And the rudeness? He's never been rude like that before.'

'Ah -that is pure Sherlock Holmes, I'm afraid. He doesn't feel the need for social niceties. Kate warned me about that early on.'

'Autistic trait,' Anna said thoughtfully.

'I don't think so,' Ed Harris replied. 'it would be easy to discount it as that, wouldn't it? I even wondered about narcissistic personality disorder for a time, but I think it's a protective mechanism. He does it to regain control, he's told me as much. His mind comes first, Anna, the case comes first always. Being abrupt, rude even, often obtains him what he wants, and more to the point, it pushes people away, as it did today. It stops interruptions, it stops distractions, and it stops emotions and the interference of others disturbing the purity of what he is doing.'

'So we support him in what he feels he needs to do?'

'Absolutely, but I would set limits if he will allow you to. You have formed a good working relationship with Sherlock, Anna. He listens to you, he respects you also, I think. Try to get him to keep it calm, and not push himself back into hypomania. Allow him to work, but try to get him to go outside once a day, get him to do some exercise in the gym or the pool even, persuade him that that will help his cognitive processes. Ensure that he eats and drinks and sleeps. In short set the pattern for when he returns to his normal life.'

'Do you think he will agree to that?'

'There's only one way to find out.'

...

The next few days developed a pattern. Sherlock would wake early, shower, switch on the laptop and sit down to work, often before the early shift had even arrived at half seven. He would eat and drink what was put before him. At about half eleven he would stand up and stretch, and ask to go outside. Once outside he would pace round the garden, muttering to himself, but tell Anna to go away when she tried to walk next to him. 'You're distracting me,' he would tell her. I'm trying to work something out.'

On his return to his room, he would sit back at the desk and start typing furiously. Stopping to eat didn't appear to be an option, and so advised by Kate, Anna started silently leaving sandwiches beside him at lunchtime, which he ate as if unaware of what he was doing. Cups of tea also disappeared the same way.

At about half two in the afternoon, he would shut the laptop, climb onto the bed, and fall asleep.
within minutes, all without speaking a word. He would sleep for a couple of hours, wake, stretch, and return to the desk where he would work until about seven when he would stop, shut the laptop, request the television be turned on, and sit in the armchair in the corner of the room, watching it for several hours, still without speaking.

He was monosyllabic even with Kate, meeting her enquiries about how he was, his work, and everything else with, 'Fine,' before turning his attention back to the television. She had to content herself with sitting with him in silence, but when she asked him if he wanted her to go, he simply said, 'Don't,' and reached out for her hand.

Knowing Sherlock, Kate took that as enough reassurance that he was just doing what he always did - working things through in his own way, in his own time. He couldn't talk because his mind was distracted elsewhere, she realised. Even when he was watching television, he would sometimes frown and look away as if trying to work something out. He was still working on the minutiae of the case, the television was just background noise to him.'

'It's almost eerie,' she told John that evening when she got back. 'He's so calm, so controlled, I've never seen him like this during a case before.'

'Is that the medication do you think?'

'Maybe. I hope so - or maybe I don't. I'm not sure I could cope with him like this all the time, he's just so - silent.'

'Ed says we're best to leave him to it. He's been through a hell of a lot in the last few weeks, Kate, you know that. He says he needs time to process it on his own before he verbalises it.'

'Did you show him the note?' Kate asked. Francoise Marchant had contacted John a few days previously. She had gone through her old letters and found something that she had claimed to have forgotten, or rather Kate thought, had been unsure whether she wanted to admit to. A letter from Adrienne Holmes dated two weeks before her death when she expressed her fear of returning to her old life, to her controlling husband. It didn't directly express suicidal ideation, but it stated that her concern for Sherlock and his future was the only thing that would make her return. It was a letter that spoke of the desire for escape. On first reading it suggested a desire to leave England permanently, to relocate to France perhaps, and Francoise had read it as that. But in the knowledge of subsequent events, there was a darker meaning that could not be missed. It was a letter of intent - and an apology. If there had been any doubt before about the cause of Adrienne's death, the letter removed them.

'Yes, I gave it to him this afternoon,' John said. 'He just read it, nodded and handed it to Anna asking her to get it scanned in, all without reacting.

'What's he up to, John?'

'Working; sorting out his head - you think there's something else?'

'I don't know. He just seems so - focused,'

'You say that as if it's a bad thing.'

'It should be done now, shouldn't it? He's worked it out, he knows what happened, he's got the answers that he wanted.'

'He never has all the answers, Kate. You know that. He just likes us to think that he does.'
'So what - we just leave him to it?'

'Until he asks for our help, yes. He's doing well, Kate. He's getting better, whatever he is doing is working. Maybe it's time to stop worrying about him.'
Chapter 49

Greg Lestrade had never been to a psychiatric unit before. He'd visited a fair few prisons in his time, and the odd rehab clinic to interrogate suspects, and on one occasion before, to agree to a request from a much younger Sherlock to work with him. But he had never felt as uncomfortable in any of these places as he did here. The reception area looked more like a five-star hotel than a hospital, and the security was more meticulous than any place he'd been to outside GCHQ. He'd had his ID checked at least the times since attempting to drive through the impressive wrought iron gates, and only Sherlocks warnings had stopped him from using Mycroft's name to smooth the seemingly impossible path to see Sherlock.

He checked his wrist for the umpteenth time that morning, and tapped his hand impatiently against his leg, checking his pocket yet again for the mobile phone that he'd irritatingly been forced to relinquish. He had an uncomfortable feeling that he was being watched - well he was being watched. Not overtly, by the two immaculately dressed and groomed receptionists behind the front desk, but covertly by the multiple CCTV cameras that he could see well hidden around the room. There was even one in the pot plant, for heaven's sake. And who knows that people would read into his behaviour in a place like this. He immediately stopped tapping his hand, rested his hands in his lap in what he hoped was a calm gesture, and then sniggering a little at his own ridiculousness, reached instead for one of the myriad of magazines on the table in front of him.

He jumped to hear his name called out, and looked up to see an attractive young woman dressed in a white nurses tunic and trousers. Her blonde hair was pulled back into a ponytail, and she looked slightly puzzled.

'Detective Inspector Lestrade?' she repeated.

'Greg, please.'

She nodded. 'I'm Anna. Would you come with me?'

She led him past the reception desk, and through a set of double doors, both made of some reinforced transparent material, down a corridor and into a room labelled 'Interview Room 4'. Access to this room, Greg couldn't help but notice, seemed to be finger-print controlled, in addition to requiring a swipe of her access card.

'What is this place?' he asked as he sat down in the proffered chair. 'It's like Fort Knox.'

'I could tell you, but then I'd have to kill you,' Anna said, as she took up a chair to the side of his, so seriously that he narrowed her eyes unconsciously as he tried to work out if she was joking, and was rewarded by a smile.

'Relax, I'm joking. What do you think that it is?'

Greg looked around him for clues to confirm what he already knew. The chairs were comfortable, but heavy - too heavy to be picked up and swung. There was no surplus furniture in the room and nothing that could be used as a weapon. The picture on the wall were canvases that looked as if they were fixed to the walls with nails - again, rendering it safe against disturbed patients. There was an observation hatch in the door, no lock on the inside, preventing staff members from being kept hostage in there. There was a panic alarm in the corner at ankle level, and another on the wall beside Anna’s chair. There were cameras concealed above the picture rail, so somewhere there must be - yes there on the opposite side of the room to the door, was a well concealed second door for emergency
'Well?' Anna asked, watching his visual survey with amusement. Smart cookie that one. He wondered what Sherlock made of her.

'John told me that Sherlock was in a private psychiatric clinic,' he said. 'It's just this is nothing like any hospital I've ever been to - private or otherwise. Plus I can't work out how somewhere like this could exist inside the patch that I've worked on for the last ten years without me coming across it in one way or another.'

'We try to remain discrete,' Anna told him. 'And that means trying to ensure that we don't call the civilian police services.'

Civilian? He was intrigued now. And a little perturbed.

'Oh don't worry, it's all strictly above board, I assure you. We have our own security arrangements, that's all.'

'Military police?' Greg asked confused.

'Close. But nothing that the government isn't aware of, I assure you. Nothing illegal. It's just that this clinic runs - off the record, shall we say. Our clients value their privacy.'

Greg tried to keep his face neutral, but he couldn't help the rising concern. What was this place? Secret Service run? Perhaps. Or something more sinister?

'I really can't tell you any more, I'm afraid,' Anna was saying. 'But John Watson knows what it is. As does Mycroft Holmes, although explaining why you've been here to him may be more difficult.'

Greg nodded shortly. 'So where is Sherlock?' He asked. 'He seemed very keen that I come and see him as soon as possible.'

'He's in his room, I'll take you through in a moment. Do you know why he wants to see you?'

'I'd love to think that it was for the pleasure of my company,' Greg said, 'but I presume that he wants my help with something. Do you know?'

Anna shook her head. 'Not a clue,' she said. 'He didn't even tell me that he'd contacted you until the front gate phoned through. The only visitors that he's had so far have been John and Kate, with a couple of visits from Mycroft. He's not even granted email access, just limited internet for his research, but he must have hacked into the system somehow to contact you.'

'So - can I see him?' Greg asked, wondering where all this was going.

'Of course. I just needed to set some ground rules. How long have you known Sherlock?'

'A long time. Since he was a teenager. Look if you're going to tell me he's been ill, it's fine. John told me what's been going on. Bipolar isn't it? Can't say I'm surprised. I've known for years there was something up with him, but he was always so bloody defensive about admitting there was anything wrong. That's why it took him so long to deal with the drug thing. It was always everyone else's problem apart from his. He wasn't an addict, of course he wasn't, it was a just society that had an issue with him modulating his own neuropharmacologist. His words, not mine, in case you wondered,' he added, looking up at Anna with a grin.

'So he's always been -'
'Difficult? Argumentative? An irritating bastard? Long as I've known him, anyway.'

'Fine then you know what to expect. As I say, I've no idea why he wants to see you, but he was insistent. He's been researching his past, so that might have something to do with it, although he's been doing everything else via John.'

'I know- John told me, got me to help with a bit of liaison with our French counterparts to find out about his mother's death - accident reports, that sort of thing. But he never asked about anything else. Why would he want to see me in person? It sounded urgent on his text.'

'He texted you? But he doesn't have a phone.'

'It came up from a random number - burn phone I thought to start with but then I checked. It's one of those online sites you can text from anonymously. Wasn't even sure it was Sherlock to start with, thought it was someone from work taking the piss, or a journalist digging for dirt, but the git came out with personal details nobody else could possibly know.'

'You're good friends then, you and Sherlock,' Anna said, sounding slightly confused.

Greg grimaced. 'You know Sherlock, he doesn't really have good friends - not that he'd admit to anyway, no I don't mean details from some late night drinking session, I mean those annoying details that he picks up. Like the mole you've got on your right thigh or the names that the bullies called you at primary school. That sort of thing.'

Anna's quizzical expression told Greg all he needed to know. 'Oh so he hasn't deduced you yet?' He chuckled. 'You're in for a treat then, when he gets down to it.' He paused and considered. 'What he's seriously never told you what you had for breakfast that morning or that your bathroom light in your flat is broken?'

Anna shook her head.

'Poor bloke must have been ill then. Is he - okay? I mean, he's not talking to purple aliens on the ceiling or anything is he?'

'Nothing like that,' Anna said with a smile. 'He's a bit quiet, a little subdued, and rather vulnerable. Other than that, I think that you'll find him fairly normal.'

'First time for everything then. So is that the end of the pep talk? I don't have to sign a disclaimer or have a strip search or anything?'

'I think we can forego that one for today,' Anna said lightly. 'Come this way.'

...

She took him through several more security locked doors, down a sequence of corridors, before finally stopping outside a room with the number 1427 on it. We're there really that number of rooms in this place, he wondered, or was it just a random number generation thing? And then he was being let through some kind of antechamber, lined with cupboards on each side, and Anna knocked quietly on the inner door, which was opened by another nurse in clinic uniform, this one dark-haired and younger. Anna was older than he had initially thought, Greg had realised during his conversation in the interview room, early thirties probably from the laughter lines around her eyes, but this nurse was in her mid-twenties. And attractive. He had to make a conscious effort not to stare.

'Chloe, this is Detective Inspector Lestrade, Sherlock's visitor,' Anna said.
'Of course, it's Lestrade,' came an irritated voice from the far side of the room. 'Now will you just let him in?'

Greg grinned despite the bizarreness of the situation. 'I see your temper hasn't improved,' he said, as his querying look to Anna was met with a nod and Chloe stood aside to let him into the room.

'Did you bring it with you?' Sherlock asked, holding out his hand without turning round or looking up from where he was staring at the laptop screen at his desk.

'I did bring it with me, yes, but I had to leave it in the safe box behind reception. Together with my phone, my keys and my wallet. It's like Fort Knox in here, Sherlock. How on earth did you think I was going to get that in?'

'You could have been a little more inventive.'

'I really hope you're not suggesting that I should have shoved it up my arse for you Sherlock. Friendship only goes so far.'

Sherlock sighed, in his characteristic 'I am surrounded by imbeciles' way. 'Anna, could you?' He asked with exaggerated politeness, still without turning round.

'Not until you tell me what's going on, no.' She sounded calm and measured, Greg noted. Not reacting to him, obviously not intimidated by him, laying down the ground rules.

Sherlock snapped the laptop shut, pushed his chair back and finally stood up. Greg had to make an effort not to react to his appearance. Sherlock had always been pale, always been thin but now his face had a translucent quality to it, through which the bones of his cheeks jutted with almost painful sharpness. The shadows under his eyes were more pronounced than Greg had seen him during his substance abuse days, and the hands jutting out from under the long sleeved t-shirt that he was wearing looked skeletal in their thinness. Sherlock's clothes hung off him and Greg wondered exactly how much weight he had lost during his illness.

'I need a USB stick, which Gavin has handily left in reception,' Sherlock was explaining.

'Greg,' Lestrade interjected, glad that some things, at least, hadn't changed.

'What do you need it for?' Anna was asked, ignoring his interjection.

'So that I can give him some files that he needs for his investigation.' Sherlocks eyes were wild now, his tone exasperated. Anna took a step towards him and placed a hand on his shoulder. Sherlock, Greg noted with surprise, didn't shake her off. Instead, he allowed her to steer him back to the chair, where he sat down and stared at the floor.

Christ, he really isn't well, Greg thought, but remembering the younger Sherlock and how much he had hated fuss, he knew that the best way forward was to keep him on track. The work, it was always about the work, even now.

'I'd quite like an explanation too,' he said, sitting down on the edge of the bed, which was the nearest available surface. 'Why am I here, Sherlock?'

The merest hint of a smile lifted the corners of Sherlocks mouth and something changed in the set of his shoulders. He pulled himself up in the chair, so that he looked more together, more poised, more - Sherlock. 'I have a case for you, Lestrade,' he said. 'I've gathered together enough evidence so that not even you should be able to miss the obvious leads in this one.'
Greg shook his head slightly, 'What case?' he asked.

'My father's.'
Chapter 50

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Ed Harris had still been working catching up on paperwork at his Harley Street office when he received the phone call from Anna. He couldn't say that he was surprised. Sherlock had evaded the subject of his abuse at the hands of his father from the beginning, but he knew the kind of man that Sherlock Holmes was now. Meticulous, thorough, ready to turn over any stone in his pursuit of the truth. He could appear to the casual acquaintance to be callous and uncaring, and yet beneath that protective facade, Ed knew that Sherlock's need for justice and the pursuance of what was right at times outweighed even that of John Watson, to whom Sherlock would compare himself to time and again to prove what true moral integrity looked like. Guided by John and Kate, his moral compass was a powerful instrument that would hold him to its course, however painful and inadvisable that might be.

As a psychiatrist, Ed Harris was required to be impartial and he was bound by the confidentiality of the consulting room. The only justification for breaking that confidentiality was when a serious crime had been committed - murder, rape, terrorism, or when the lives of other would be put at risk by failing to disclose. Sherlock's own abuse was in the past, and the perpetrator was dead and no longer a risk to others. He understood why Sherlock had not told him of the nature of what he had been investigating. The conclusions seemed inevitable. Sherlock's unshakeable drive to find the truth, no matter how painful, together with his desire for justice to be done had led him to ask the unaskable question. Had his father abused other boys as he had Sherlock, and worse still, had other men in his circle acted in a similar manner?

The intranet had led to an easy dissemination of information for men, and occasionally women, with this vile propensity. But before the internet, like had somehow still called out to like. It was well documented that paedophiles rarely hunted alone; they tended to find others of a similar perversion. Evil flourished in company. The newspapers were full of stories of public figures who had abused their positions of authority, holding their victims in fear and helplessness. That Sherlock had uncovered something similar within his father's own social and professional circle was not unthinkable. And if it was true, then he would want that information made public.

But there was a further complication, which Sherlock Holmes, with his encyclopaedic knowledge of criminal law would have been only too aware of. If he contacted other victims, or witnesses, then he could prejudice any future criminal case against perpetrators who were still alive and could yet be brought to justice. Viscount Holmes could be publicly discredited, but nothing more. The dead could not defend themselves and therefore could not be brought to trial. But if Sherlock had uncovered what Anna suspected that he had, then there were others who could be prosecuted through the criminal courts, other abuse survivors who could receive justice, and potentially other future victims who could be protected from these predators. And Ed had a duty not only to ensure that Sherlock in his current state of mind was aware of the risks of corrupting evidence, but also of the implications of what he was about to do, and what his duties to the public interest were, mental illness or not.

'Are you here to reprimand me?' Sherlock asked when Ed walked into his room at the Norwood clinic thirty minutes later. He was half sitting, half lying on his bed, long legs crossed in front of him, the television was on and he was staring at it but Ed doubted if he could have told him what he was watching.

'Why do you assume that? I am neither your parent nor your headmaster, Sherlock. I am here to
support you, not to chastise you. Your decisions remain your own," Ed said, taking a seat next to Sherlock's bed.

'Even if they are unwise?' Sherlock asked, fixing him with an intense stare. Ed knew that look well - defensive, belligerent, likely to descend into anger unless the conversation was redirected.

'Aren't you regretting your actions?' he asked calmly.

'Not for a moment.'

'Did you think through the consequences of what you were doing.'

'Of course.'

'And?'

'And I run the risk of dredging up the past for those who would prefer to keep it buried. Some of those individuals deserve to have it brought to the light - others' he looked away. 'Others may be forced to confront what they would rather not.'

'You among them?'

'My father is dead. The dead cannot be prosecuted. It seems unlikely that I would be called on to give evidence in court.'

'And if you were?'

'Then I would have to deal with that when the time came.'

Ed allowed him a moment to consider the implications of that, and when it became clear that he was not going to talk further on the subject, asked, 'Were there others, Sherlock? Is that what you discovered?'

'Other victims? Almost certainly,' there was a bitter edge to Sherlock's voice that Ed could not ignore.

'You were a child, Sherlock. The guilt is not yours.'

'I never mentioned guilt.'

'But you feel it just the same.'

Sherlock looked up at him sharply, the look that said that Ed had interpreted the situation correctly. That he had found the subtext that Sherlock struggled to voice himself.

'If I had spoken out, then others could have been saved,' Sherlock said., staring at his hands again now. 'My fear prevented me. And then, when my father died, I buried it. I allowed the memories that I had lost in Elmhurst to remain hidden. I did not even attempt to uncover them.'

'Do you wish that you had?'

Sherlock shook his head. 'It was too painful. I was advised to keep that box shut, and I chose to comply with that advice.'

'And now?'
'Now I remember what I discovered.'

Ed remained silent or several minutes, watching him as he sat, shoulders hunched, forehead resting on his knees, arms over his head. Childlike, struggling to vocalise what he knew, what he felt, what he must express. At times like these there was always a dichotomy between the desire as a human being to comfort, to put a stop to the pain of the experience, of the revelation, and the desire of the psychiatrist to bring that experience out into the open. To discuss, to reveal, to dissect, and in so doing to eventually heal. Knowing when to proceed and when to call a halt was one of the most subtle skills in psychiatry, and one that took years to learn.

'Do you think that I did the wrong thing?' Sherlock asked finally.

'In telling Lestrade? In giving him the memory stick? Only you know that, Sherlock.'

'Do you know what was on it?'

'Why don't you tell me?'

'Enough evidence, if processed correctly, to indict enough peers of the realm to result in several empty benches in the House of Lords.' He looked up at Ed, assessing his reaction, but he found none. The psychiatrist was well-practiced in keeping his face calm, his voice level, no matter what was disclosed to him.

'There were others then. In your father's acquaintance, who -'

'Had a taste for young boys? Yes.'

'And you discovered this?'

Sherlock hesitated for only a moment before starting to speak. 'After I saw Daniel Brierley coming out of my father's study, I went looking,' he said. 'It took me weeks to find it. He hadn't hidden it in the safe, he was too clever for that. There was a false drawer, in the antique document cabinet that he had; a secret compartment. Behind that I found…,' Sherlock broke off, unable to continue.

'What did you find, Sherlock?' Ed prompted him after several minutes silence.

'Pictures. Horrible, horrible pictures, and letters, from people that he knew, from men who had come to the house, men that I had met, who had wives, and children, and respectable careers.' Sherlock spat the last few words out as if he was choking on them, his voice reflecting his disgust.

'Men like your father?' Ed asked.

'Men exactly like my father, yes.'

'Did you confront him with it?'

'No. I was going to go to the police, but I was looking for more than evidence. It turned out that there was more than one false drawer. I had to be careful; I couldn't take anything out of the room. I was relying on my memory, writing it down in a notebook upstairs.

'I was so nearly finished, so nearly. The day that I heard my father with Daniel in the outbuilding, I had made my mind up to go to the police. I was just looking for one more piece of evidence, something concrete, but I hadn't been able to find it. My father caught me coming out of his study. I told him that I was looking for information about my mother's death, but I don't think that he believed me. I think that he knew exactly what I'd uncovered. I did the first thing that came into my head and
yelled at him, called him a murderer, said that I knew that he'd arranged her death.

'What happened?'

'He threatened me. Told me that nobody would believe me, that I would be branded a liar or a lunatic. He said that if I told anyone he would destroy me. He hit me - hard, knocked me to the ground, would have gone in for more but I ran off. I ran to the cottage to tell Daniel's father. I thought that even if I couldn't protect myself, then maybe, maybe I could protect him.'

'And Daniel's father didn't believe you either,' Ed prompted.

'No. I didn't know what else to do. If he didn't believe me then I didn't think the police would believe me either. I was scared of what my father would do to me if I went that far. I walked out of the estate, kept walking until I got to the village. Ordered a pint of cider because I was thirsty. It helped. I had another, and another, I lost count of how many I had, and the next thing I knew the chauffeur was there, throwing me in the back of the car and taking me back to The Hall.

'The following day, I went to try to find Daniel. If his father wouldn't listen to me, I was hoping that maybe he would. I caught up with him by the stables. I told him that I knew what my father was doing to him, tried to persuade him to go with me to the police. He got upset, tried to run away, and then his father came along, and - well, you know the rest.'

'Pete Brierley attacked you.'

'With my father's encouragement, if Mycroft is correct. Yes.'

'And your father refused to allow you to be taken to hospital despite the severity of your injuries.'

'So it would appear. He had me locked in my room, told the staff that I was rambling from the head injury and that I'd thrown myself out of a tree in an attempt to get attention.'

'And you ended up in Elmhurst.'

'Yes.'

'Where the ECT effectively destroyed the memories that you had - both of your own abuse and of that of others.'

'Yes.'

Ed allowed him several minutes of silence. 'Sherlock, I am sure that this has occurred to you, but if the other perpetrators are still alive, then we have to consider the possibility that there may be other victims, even today.'

'I am well aware of that.'

'Is that why you gave that memory stick to Lestrade?'

'Partly.'

'And the other reason?'

'I want justice. No, it's worse than that. I want retribution,' there was anger in his voice now, where previously there had only been pain. 'I want those vile excuses for human beings to feel the slow, cold, realisation that they are about to be unmasked, as the police knock on their doors, that all of their filthy secrets are finally going to brought into the light. I only wish that I could be there to see
the look in their eyes when that happens.'

'You want revenge?'

'No,' Sherlock shook his head, finally looking at Ed properly, as if to check that he understood. 'I want retribution. It isn't the same.'

'Your father is dead. Do you want retribution against him, too?'

'I want the world to know what he was.'

'Even if it impacts on you? On Mycroft.'

'I don't care about myself, or what others might think of me. But Mycroft,' he shook his head again. 'I hadn't considered the impact it might have on Mycroft.'

'Do you think that you should talk to him about it?'

'No.'

'Why not.'

'Because he would try to bury it, and this can't be buried. I've done enough harm as it is by keeping it buried for so long.'

'It wasn't your fault, Sherlock.'

'Wasn't it?' again that prolonged eye contact, that search for understanding. 'If I'd spoken out sooner, if I'd told someone what was happening to me, then maybe, just maybe, they would have realised that it was part of something much bigger.'

'You tried. Nobody believed you.'

'I should have tried harder.'

'Sherlock, you were a child,' Ed's tone was deliberately firm and reassuring. 'You were terrified of your father. At that age, even being subjected to that kind of abuse can seem better than the fear of the unknown.'

'Does that make my silence excusable?'

'It makes it understandable. But what you have to realise is that there is no judgement here - not for you. What your father did, to you, to others, what the other men did, that was the crime. You are not to blame for that.'

'But I could have saved the others. If I had taken what I had known to the police. If I had done it sooner. If I hadn't been so damned obsessed with having the perfect case.'

'You couldn't have known, Sherlock; you couldn't have known that he would find you.'

'Perhaps I wanted to be found. I was delaying. I knew what I needed to do, but I couldn't do it.'

Silence again, stretching for what seemed like an eternity. Anna sitting at the back of the room, barely daring to breathe, aware that this was not only the break-through that they had been waiting for, but something that went far beyond these four walls, and Sherlock's recovery. It was something that would ricochet off the establishment itself.
'Why did you give the memory stick to Lestrade? Why not discuss it with me - or with Anna - first.'

'I did what I had to do.'

_He's trying to avoid making the same mistake twice_, Anna realised. _Last time he let his fear prevent him from going to the police, he let emotion cloud his judgement. This time he just pieced it together and handed it in. That's why he didn't discuss it with anyone. That's why he told Lestrade not to talk about it with John, or Kate, and especially not with Mycroft._

'What do you think that Lestrade will do with it?'

'I hope what is right.'

'You hope, or you know?'

'Greg Lestrade is a good man.'

'So is John Watson. Why not trust him with this?'

'Because John will do what is morally **right**. He will take into account the emotionally well-being of all concerned. He will feel the need to discuss the consequences. Lestrade will do what is **correct**.'

'And that's not the same thing?'

'Not always, no.'

'Did you tell him that?'

'No, I told him that what he did with the stick was his decision.'

'But you knew what you wanted him to do with it.'

'Yes.'

'So why not tell him that you want him to proceed with the investigation and to make it public?'

'Because – because…,' Sherlock's voice broke off.

'Sherlock nodded. 'The implications for this spread far beyond the perpetrators, and the victims. Families will be destroyed. Daughters, grandchildren, will realise that their relatives are not who they thought that they were. Stories will emerge of monsters in the night that will rip holes in their comfortable existence, and I cannot be the only one responsible for that.'

'Had it was easier before, you know,' he said conversationally, looking at Ed. 'Before I was ill. I didn't think about these things back then. I only considered the crime and the case. The humanity behind it, the people affected, the sentiment was irrelevant. I can't do that anymore.'

'Does that not make you a better human being?'

'It makes me a worse detective.'

'I think you might be surprised about the revelations that your illness will bring to your work in the future.'
'Perhaps.'

Sherlock sat back against his pillows and sighed. 'What will he do with it, do you think?'

'I suspect that he will be thinking very long and hard about if he wants to even look at that memory stick.'

'Oh he'll look at it. He's too curious not to.'

'And then?'

'And then - I don't know.' Sherlock frowned. 'Would you tell him something for me? Would you tell him that it's important? That he needs to act on it?'

'If that is what you want, then of course.'

'Tell him that he has to treat it like any other case. That he cannot allow morality, or any misplaced sense of sentiment to get in the way. And tell him that he can't let Mycroft find out.'

'And when Mycroft does find out?'

'I want it to have gone too far for him to stop it.'

'Why do you think that he would?'

'Because it would destroy the very fabric of what he is spending his life trying to protect.'

'Some would argue that that thing is you. Mycroft cares deeply for you, Sherlock, do you not think that he would want what is best for you?'

'My father is dead. I am safe. Mycroft will act for what he perceives to be the greater good.'

'And you won't discuss it with him?'

'No.'

'Have you considered the impact it might have on him personally?'

'He knows what my father was. He told me about Daniel Brierley, remember? He even believes that our father was implicated somehow in our mother’s death - incorrectly as it turned out. His only involvement was in a process of years of cruelty and emotional abuse that drove her to take her own life. Mycroft knew about that. I doubt any further revelations will prove upsetting to him, other than to his pride.'

'Will you at least consider the impact it might have on him? After all, it is his history too. Questions will be asked that might prove uncomfortable to Mycroft and this will affect his life considerably for the duration of any media storm and beyond.

Another small nod from Sherlock, acknowledging the concept but nothing more. He was set in this, Ed Harris realised. Subconsciously, he knew what he wanted, what he needed to do, whoever the casualties might be.

'And Kate?' Ed asked more gently. 'She may be the other casualty of this. You may both find your lives under considerable more public scrutiny than you would wish.'

'Kate will understand,' Sherlock told him, looking puzzled at the suggestion that it could be
otherwise. 'She is a warrior, in her way. . She believes in what is true and what is just, and she cares little for the opinion of the wider world. She will understand why this has to be done.' He paused slightly and then with an abrupt change in mood said, 'Talk to Lestrade, will you? Tell him that - that he needs to do what is right. Tell him that I trust him to do that.'

_Trust_, Anna thought, as she let Ed out of the outer door a few minutes later. _Always such an important thing for him. And yet despite everything, the person he trusts with this is not Kate, who he loves, or John, who is knows to be good and true, but the policeman, the blunt instrument, because the truth is always more important to him that the consequences._

Chapter End Notes

This chapter comes with thanks to 7percentsolution and to Graveofthefireflies for the betaing and advice.

And of course, huge thanks to everyone who has stuck with the story. The end is definitely in sight....
Chapter 51

Greg Lestrade had left the clinic several hours earlier with the encoded USB stick in his pocket, and knowledge that he would much rather not have in his head.

It wasn't just knowing what had happened to Sherlock that bothered him, or the existence of other victims that Sherlock had alluded to. He'd come across plenty of other cases of child abuse in his career; it seemed to be round every corner. Probe the past of the majority of youngsters in trouble with the police, and you'd find a story of abuse in one shape or form - emotional, physical or sexual abuse, domestic violence, parents more interested in drink and drugs than their kids; it all amounted to a damaged childhood and a damaged individual who had learnt that they owed the world nothing because the world from an early age had taught them that to survive you had to rely on yourself. There were the exceptions, of course, the kids from decent families who went off the rails anyway, but even then there was usually something if you dug deep enough. Abuse came in many forms, and neglect was one of the most damaging.

'They fuck you up, your mum and dad,' Greg quoted aloud as he walked to his car, wondering what complexes his own kids would have from his split with his wife. He needed to be more aware of it, encourage them to talk, encourage them to build - what was it called? Resilience. Encourage them to build resilience, to see the glass as half full, not half empty, to learn to dance in the rain. All of those well-being seminars were obviously starting to pay off.

But that didn't help with the problem at hand. The memory stick in his pocket was dynamite, and yet Sherlock had forbidden him from discussing it from Mycroft, who was likely to have the biggest objection to Greg putting it in the hands of those who might act on it. Unfortunately, he had forbidden from discussing it with John, Kate or anybody else outside of the police force. Bloody Sherlock, putting him in an impossible situation yet again.

The drive home was a long one, the traffic frustratingly slow. He let himself into his house, picked the post up from the doormat and flicked through it. The phone ringing in his pocket made him jump as it jarred with the silence in the house. He took it out and checked the screen. Unknown number. That meant one of either two things. Either it was work trying to contact him, or it was one of those bloody PPI companies that he had been inundated by recently. Reluctantly he picked up the call and left a pause for the automated voice. When none came, he admitted, 'Lestrade'.

'Greg Lestrade, Metropolitan Police?'

'Speaking. Who is this?'

'My name is Edward Harris. I'm a psychiatrist at the Norwood Clinic. I understand that one of my patients gave you an item of some importance this evening.'

Lestrade wandered into the living room and flicked on the light, before carefully answering, 'With respect, I have no way of knowing that you are who you say you are, and even if you are, I am not at liberty to discuss anything with you.'

There was a low pitched chuckle from the end of the phone. 'Sherlock has talked to me about you many times. I am relieved to discover that his descriptions of your discretion and loyalty were not displaced. Don't worry, Inspector Lestrade, I'm not asking you to tell me anything that I am not already aware of. At the end of this phone call, by all means contact the clinic to confirm that I am who I say I am, but please be reassured that I am phoning you only to give you some relevant information.'
Anna, Sherlock's psychiatric nurse, was concerned about the events of this evening and contacted me. The question of Sherlock's ability to make an informed decision about passing on information of the magnitude that he has given to you this evening has no doubt crossed your mind.

It hadn't. It should have. Greg mentally kicked himself. Sherlock was ill, really ill. Only a few weeks ago he'd been talking to people who weren't there and trying to throw himself off a tall building, although thinking about it neither of those two things were exactly out of character for him. But still - he had seemed so calm when Greg had seen him, so logical, so - Sherlock, that the thought that he might not be making this decision 'in a clear mind,' hadn't even occurred to him.

'Do you know what is on the memory stick?' Greg asked.

'Not in its entirety, no. But I know that it relates to abusive activities that took place in the 1980s and 1990s. I know that one of those implicated is Sherlock's father, but from what he tells me, Viscount Holmes is not the only public figure, or indeed the only peer of the realm implicated.'

Greg walked over to the armchair and sat down on it rather more quickly than he had intended.

'He didn't tell you?' Ed Harris asked, and his tone was gentle, and if Greg had doubted his identify before, he didn't now.

'Not that it involved his father, no. Nor the - extent of it.'

'What I am telephoning you to tell you is that in my opinion Sherlock is in sound mind to make this decision. It was not done lightly, and was not influenced by his psychiatric illness. In short, you may choose to do with the information as you will, without fear of recriminations in the future because of the nature by which you came by it.'

'Even from Mycroft?'

'What you have to understand, Greg, is that you are an instrument, nothing more.'

'An instrument for what?'

'For the truth.'

'Did Sherlock put you up to this?' Greg asked suspiciously.

'He asked me to contact you, yes. I could not have had this conversation without his permission.'

'Why? Why did he ask you to contact me?'

'Because he was concerned that you might find your morality in conflict with your conscience.'

'My... his words?' Greg's mind was reeling.

'I'm paraphrasing, but yes.'

Greg let out a long slow breath. 'What would you do?' he asked.

'That's not the question really, is it?'

'I know, but still.'

'I would consider that of all the people in his acquaintance, Sherlock chose you for this. Not Kate, not John, not his brother. None of them are aware of exactly what is on that memory stick, of the
extent of what Sherlock has uncovered.'

'Am I meant to be flattered by that?'

'You're meant to ask yourself why he chose you.'

Greg rubbed a hand across his eyes, and stretched his legs out in front of him as he thought about it. 'Because - Christ, this is hard. You could give Sherlock a run for his money, you know that?'

'I'll take that as a compliment,' Ed said. 'But it doesn't get away from the question.'

Greg closed his eyes and considered what he knew of Sherlock Holmes. He thought of the lost, skinny young man he had first met in that pub just outside Cambridge, drunk, withdrawing, but still asking, always asking, always trying to find the answers. Just as he was now.

'He'd want me to ask the questions,' he said.

'He trusts you to find the truth, Greg,' Ed told him. 'To finish what he started, and to ask the questions that he found himself unable to.'

'It's incomplete then?' Greg paused, considering the implications of this. 'Sherlock left an investigation unfinished? He never leaves an investigation unfinished. He worries at it, like a puzzle box until he finds an answer, no matter how ridiculous that answer may be.'

There was silence at the other end of the line.

'I could do with a little help here,' he said finally when the silence showed no sign of ending.

'You don't need it. You're getting there on your own.'

'You mean I need to ask myself why he couldn't finish it? Because it was too close to home I suppose. Too painful? Is that it?'

'I can tell you that unlocking his past has been the key to both Sherlock's illness and his recovery. He has asked both John and Kate to help investigate what he either did not know or has forgotten, to fill in the gaps in his personal history.'

'So why not this?'

And then he knew. Because Sherlock knew that Kate would always put Sherlock first, that she would always try to protect him. Because he knew that John Watson would tie himself in knots trying to work out the morality of the situation. Who might be hurt, who might benefit, weighing up the pros and cons. But Greg Lestrade could always be trusted to look for the truth, no matter what, to let out the demons, and by exposing them to the light of day, remove their power and show the world that the monsters of their childhood were just flesh and bone after all.

'What's the story?' he said finally. 'The Greek one about the box that shouldn't be opened?'

'Pandora's box.'

'Is that what this is?'

'In a way yes, I think so.'

'And all those other victims? What about them? What if they're not ready to face this yet?' He was starting to realise exactly how massive his thing could be, how many lives it could impact on.
'I suspect that they already face it, Greg, day after day. Perhaps Sherlock feels that they deserve a little closure too.'

'Closure? Or justice?'

'Both, perhaps.'

'Pandora's box couldn't be closed. Isn't that the way the story goes?'

'And if you allow this to be properly investigated, then I suspect that this box won't be closed again either.'

'That's a big responsibility.'

'And one that Sherlock trusted you with.'

Greg ran a hand through his closely cropped hair and then rested his head back against the wall and closed his eyes. 'What are you saying?'

'I'm saying that Sherlock trusted you to do what is right with the information on that stick. To finish what he started.'

'And the other victims?'

'Sherlock always said that the difference between you and John was that where John would do what was right, you would do what needed to be done.'

'He asked me to finish the investigation - that's what you're telling me.'

'Exactly. So why do you doubt that is what you should do?'

'Because Sherlock can be - erratic. Especially when he's like this.'

'And yet I am telling you that he is currently in clear mind,' Ed said, adding, 'Tell me, if you came across this information from another source, would you doubt what you should do with it? If you didn't personally know one of the victims or their families?'

'No. I'd investigate,' Greg said, realising that it was true. If the information had come from any other source he knew exactly what he would do with it.

'So why is this any different?'

'Because Sherlock is a friend.'

'And do you think that he gave it to you as a policeman or as a friend?'

'As a policeman,' Greg said, realising the implications of that as he said it. 'You're right. That is how he expects me to act isn't it? As a policeman.'

'I think you've just answered your own question.'

Greg paused for a moment, considering. 'If you were me, knowing what you know, what would you do?'

'As a psychiatrist, I can't express an opinion. As a human being.'
'Go on,'

'Personally, I'd open Pandora's box. Remember that at the very bottom of that box, when all the monsters had been unleashed, was hope. And Sherlock, in particular, needs of much of that as we can provide him with at the moment.'
Chapter 52

Anna had expected Sherlock to find a sense of closure now that the memory stick was safely in Greg Lestrade's hands, and that he had finally felt able to talk about the events surrounding its discovery with Ed Harris. She had expected him to find a sense of relief in that, to finally be ready to talk, and just perhaps, ready to find a way to move on. But as ever, his reaction surprised her.

By the time that she arrived at work at half past seven the next morning, he was already seated at his desk, fully dressed, working again on the file that he was preparing for John and Kate. It contained, she knew, his entire childhood laid out in black and white, illustrated and perfectly annotated. There was a section on his mother's own personal history, stretching from her childhood, all the way through from her life to her death, not as Mycroft had assumed at her husband's arrangement, but from suicide as a result of her illness. There was a careful account of her many episodes of mental illness as well, a familiar story from the not so distant past of a woman whose illness had been a source of shame, something to be kept hidden, something to be explained away and excused, pushing her into a cycle of self-medication with benzodiazepines, deteriorating mental health and recurrent clinic admissions. Attitudes to mental illness were changing, for which Anna was eternally grateful, but still, some of the stigma that Sherlock felt showed itself in the way that he had documented these episodes. His mother, too, had not been overly keen on medication, going through phases and compliance and non-compliance with the various drugs that her psychiatrists had tried.

Much of this history had been pieced together by John and Kate, Anna knew, both from the accounts of witnesses that they had tracked down, and from the medical records that John had been able to extract from a variety of archives. Adrienne's final stay at the clinic and her self-discharge from there on the morning of her death had been well documented. What the clinic staff had not known about at the time of her departure was the letter that she had received from the husband on the morning of her death. This had only been found in her room when they were cleaning it for the next client. John had discovered it by some careful digging through the clinics archives. It had been found in her medical notes, without anybody seemingly having realised its implications. In it, Richard Holmes had clearly stated that unless his wife returned home immediately, he would be sending Sherlock to a different school, one that could 'manage his behaviour' which was becoming ever more difficult in his mother's absence. A threat obviously designed to enforce her return to him. Whether she intended to return home and then at the last moment decided that oblivion was preferable to returning to an abusive marriage, or whether her intention had always been to drive over the side of the cliff road, nobody would ever know.

In Sherlock's account too, were the photographs of Daniel Brierley and his father, Sherlock's own account of everts interweaved with what Mycroft had uncovered. Daniel's subsequent life and his premature death and the crime reports related to that were included in an appendix; relevant to Sherlock's life, but not an intrinsic part of it. What was not included for John and Kate to read, and what only Anna and Ed knew about, was what Sherlock had uncovered in his father's study, the information that now lay safely in the hands of Greg Lestrade.

Elmhurst had its own chapter. Again, John had gone through both medical records, consultation records kept by James Harrison, Sherlock's psychiatrist from those days, and interviews with the staff that he had been able to track down, in order to formulate as complete a record as possible.

And finally, came a record of Richard Holmes' final illness and death, and there the account finished. As if what had come after was of no consequence to Sherlock. Of his removal from Elmhurst by Mycroft late at night, and with a court order to override a section under the Mental Health Act there was no mention. Curious that he should see his father's death as the end of the story, or perhaps he
saw it as the beginning of his new story. It was almost impossible to tell.

The account was finished, Anna knew it. It had been finished before Sherlock had started work on the file for Lestrade, but somehow he was finding it impossible to leave it alone. She watched as he scanned the pages impatiently, deleting one word, inserting another, only to revert back to the original five minutes later. He would move pictures around within the text, he would search the Internet to check his data, only to discover that he was correct in his facts, and when he reached the end of the document, he would return again to the beginning and the entire process would begin again.

After three hours of this, refusing food, refusing drink, grudgingly accepting his medication, Anna watched him becoming progressively more agitated and then the pacing started. He would walk from the laptop to the window and back, flick through a few more pages, change another punctuation mark and then pace again.

Anna watched him pace like this for maybe twenty minutes, waiting to see if he would recognise the pattern himself and act on it. When he showed no sign of stopping, she put down the book that she had been holding in her hand all morning with little hope of reading, and walked over to him as he sat, scanning the pages of the document. 'Why don't you leave it as it is?' she asked.

He shook his head. 'There's something missing,' he said. 'I just can't work out what.'

'Has it occurred to you that perhaps that is because it isn't data that you're looking for? It's answers, and you may well not find them in that document.'

In answer, he stood up so fast that the chair behind him fell to the ground, and he kicked at it in frustration. Anna took a step back, watching, waiting, aware of the chance that he could become aggressive in this state of mind, yet confident that he trusted her enough not to lash out at her.

'Take some deep breaths,' she said calmly, 'and tell me what you need.'

He was standing stock still, eyes closed, teeth clenched, hands in fists by his side.

'You can control this,' she told him. 'Concentrate on your breathing, bring it under control,'

And slowly she watched him do as she suggested, using the techniques that he had learnt. Breathe all the way out, breathe in for the count of five, hold for the count of two, breathe all the way out for the count of five and repeat. Finally he opened his eyes and shook his head slightly, still avoiding eye contact. 'I need to get out of here,' he said.

'Garden?'

'Yes.'

'Come on then,' she said, unobtrusively pressing the call button on her personal alarm for back-up. She would take him outside, but in his current condition she wasn't doing it alone.

She led him out through the antechamber to the room where both their coats were hanging up, Anna having predicted on her arrival this morning that a trip outside was probably on the cards, and by the time they reached the corridor, Mark was there, and fell into step behind them. Sherlock, still silent, ignored his presence entirely.

Once outside he walked all the way round the perimeter of the garden, head down, before finally making for a bench and sitting down.
'Better?' Anna asked.

'A little.'

'Frustrated?'

'Yes.'

'Can you explain?'

'I want to fix this. I want it done, finished. I thought - I thought -'

Anna waited for him to complete the thought, and when he didn't added, 'You thought you would finish the case and that somehow everything would go back to the way it was before.'

'Sounds ridiculous, doesn't it?'

'Not really, no. If we were machines then it would be precisely that simple.'

'Emotion,' Sherlock said. 'The grit on the lens; Mycroft always told me it would cause problems.'

'You don't really believe that do you?'

'No,' he said, shaking his head. 'And nor does Mycroft, not really. Without emotion our lives would be black and white. I prefer the colour version.'

'And which do you think life here is?'

He frowned as he considered. 'Everything is simple here, it's clean, pure, uncomplicated.'

'Which is why it can be so difficult to leave it behind.'

'You're saying that I don't want to finish the case, because when I do it will be time to leave?'

'Perhaps - you tell me.'

'Maybe. Maybe I just can't accept that that is all there is.'

'Your past?'

He nodded.

'Sherlock you have been through enough for several lifetimes as it is. Why does there have to be more?'

'Because I want there to be more. Because despite everything, it still doesn't explain -'

'You?'

'Precisely.'

'Human psychology isn't that simple. We are all formed from a combination of genetics, life events, neural biochemistry, and protective and exacerbating factors. You can't explain yourself away in simple terms.'

'Then how do I fix it?' he asked, clearly frustrated.
'The way that you are,' Anna told him. 'By talking, by understanding, by accepting your past and by taking medication.'

'So this is me now? Like this?' The emotion, the raw despair in his voice was almost painful to hear.

'Not remotely,' Anna said, placing a hand on his shoulder, letting him know that she was with him in this. 'Nothing is static, Sherlock,' she told him. 'Life will change, you will change, your illness will change, and your acceptance of your past and how you feel about it will change. You are getting better, and you will continue to do so.'

'If I keep doing what I'm told?' he asked, with a sideways glance at her.

Anna chuckled. 'That bothers you doesn't it?'

'I don't like relying on people - or on pharmacology,' he said with a frown.

'You rely on John, and Kate, and even on Mycroft to an extent,' she reminded him.

'That's different. They chose me.' He was staring at the ground now, obviously uncomfortable with where this conversation was going.

'You're bothered by the fact that Ed Harris and I are only here because we have to be?'

'Perhaps.'

'We choose our patients, Sherlock,' she told him. 'If we didn't connect to you in some way, if we didn't feel that we could help, if we didn't want to help, then we wouldn't have continued to look after you.'

'Despite me being an awkward sod?'

'Perhaps because you're an awkward sod,' Anna said with a smile. 'I'll take challenging over boring and wallowing in self-pity any day.'

Sherlock gave her another sideways look, lips twisting up into an amused smirk.

'Yes, you're right, that was very unprofessional of me,' Anna murmured, continuing to look straight ahead. 'Let's just hope that nobody is listening.'

'I couldn't have done this without you, you know,' Sherlock said quietly.

'You didn't have to. That's the whole point of the clinic.'

'I'm trying to say thank you, Anna.'

'I know, and I appreciate it. You're more than welcome.'

She turned to look at him and grinned. 'Look at you, all polite. This isn't goodbye, you know. You don't get rid of me that easily. I'm going to be looking after you when you get home too.'

'Home,' he said, one hand coming up to ruffle his hair at the back.

'You know that you do that when you're feeling uncomfortable?'

'Do I? How well you know me.'
'Go on, spit it out.'

'Coming here - it was like the final admission of defeat, but once I'd done that, there was something almost glorious in it. Like falling into a feather bed when you've been awake for several days. I just wanted everything to stop, and here it did.

'And back home?'

'I don't know,' he said looking up at the sky, which was blue and cloudless, 'I worry that all the triggers will still be there.'

'But you are not the same,' Anna told him. 'Isn't that what we've just been talking about? You've already changed, Sherlock. Your attitude to this illness and how you approach it is entirely different to what it was two months ago. You have an understanding of it now, and a whole array of cognitive tools to use when things get difficult.'

'You think that it's time that I went home, don't you?' he asked, his eyes narrowing as he considered this.

'Don't you?

He shook his head slightly, as he turned to look at her. 'Anna, you've spent the last four weeks telling me that I need to be here. Now you're telling me that I need to leave?'

'I'm saying that we need to start planning for your discharge. To start thinking about where you go from here.'

'Why?' he sounded anxious at the concept.

'Did you ever read the Nurse Matilda books as a child?' Anna asked.

He looked puzzled. 'I don't think so. If I did, then I deleted them.'

'You mean you lost the memory from the ECT.'

'I forget that I don't have to lie to you,' he said.

'The books were made into the Nanny McPhee films,' Anna said.

Again, Sherlock shook his head.

'They're children's books. About a nanny for naughty children,' she told him. 'She tells the children that when they do not want her, but need her, she must stay, but when they want her, but don't need her, then she must go. Well the clinic is a bit like that.'

'You mean that I need to leave because I don't want to?' he asked.

'Precisely that. You're getting too comfortable here. We need to start thinking about getting you home.'

'It's not that I don't want to go home,' he said, staring at the ground again. 'I just don't know that I'm ready.'

'You scared?' Anna asked, after allowing him a pause to consider what this might mean.

'A little,' he admitted.
'Can you put it into words?'

He frowned before saying, 'It's safe here; I know that I can't do anything - to myself, or anyone else. There is a peace in that.'

'Do you think you might do something?' she asked

'Not now, no,' he shook his head, and hesitated before adding, 'but before -'

He broke off and buried his face in his hands for a moment, 'What if the voices come back?' he asked, fear in his voice now, his words tripping over each other in his haste to express them. 'What if they're like they are before and what if I can't resist them next time? The things that they said - about Kate. Awful, awful things. What if -'

'Hey,' Anna said, putting an arm round his shoulders. 'You're okay. It's better now, isn't it?'

He nodded my head still buried, and Anna rubbed his arm a little in reassurance.

'And that's largely due to the medication,' she told him. 'And as long as you keep taking it, the voices should stay under control, And if they do come back, then you tell me and we deal with it.'

Another nod.

'Sherlock, you're not going to be on your own,' she told him. 'I will be there for as long as you need me. Every day if that's what it takes, and when I'm not there, I'm only on the other end of the phone.'

He was silent for a while, composing himself, head still hidden, but his breathing was slower as the panic receded.

'It's normal to be scared,' Anna told him, calmly. 'It's safe here, it's controlled. Outside you have to deal with whatever life is throwing at you and after the peace and routine of being in here that can be terrifying.'

'When I was eight, I broke my arm,' Sherlock said, finally sitting up. 'When they took the cast off, it felt as if my entire arm was going to disintegrate without its support. The idea of leaving here - it feels a little like that.'

'When you think about home, what do you see?' Anna asked him.

'I see the flat in Baker Street, I see myself sitting in my chair, I see myself pacing, and working.'

'And Kate?'

'The Baker Street I imagine, the one that I'm concerned about returning to doesn't have her in it. Why is that?'

'Because your mind is accessing negative images still,' Anna said. It's a symptom of the depression. Try again. Picture your flat with her in it. Maybe even John, too. They're the ones who will support you when you get home after all. You're not going to have to do this alone.'

Sherlock considered for a moment. He didn't speak but his body language became more relaxed.

'Better?' Anna asked.

He nodded.
'I can't promise miracles, Sherlock. What I can promise you is that one day in the future, and it may be weeks or even months away from now, you will catch yourself in a moment and realise that you are happy. Not just content, but happy. When that happens, remember how you feel now, how impossible it felt, and file that away for the future.'

'For when it happens next time?' he asked.

'You may never have another episode like this,' she told him. 'You managed nearly twenty years since the last one. With medication, and regular psychiatric support the hope is that it will never happen this severely again.'

'And if it does?'

'Then the clinic is here. Anytime that you need it. But the trick is to catch it early. To recognise the early signs and to act on it. And that is a large part of what we are teaching you here.'

Sherlock nodded again, and they sat there in companionable silence for a long time before he stood up and asked to go back inside.

Once back in his room, he sat down at his laptop once more, and made a few final changes to his dossier, before asking Anna to make sure that copies got to both John and Kate, and shutting the laptop down with a touch of finality.

Then he switched on the television, and lost himself in an episode of Inspector Morse, yelling at their inaccuracies aloud. And Anna, watching him with a smile, fired off an email to Ed Harris telling him that in her opinion, it was time to start planning for Sherlock Holmes to go home.
Chapter 53

For security's sake, it was decided that the dossier should not leave the clinic. And so the following day, Kate and John found themselves in a bright sunny room in the education section of the clinic, with windows looking out onto the garden, preparing to read about Sherlock’s past on a pair of identical laptops.

'You ready?' John asked Kate,

'Ready as I'll ever be.

They had read in silence, John finishing first, but waiting for Kate, watching her read, unconsciously chewing the side of her thumb as she did so, worrying off the strips of skin there in a habit he knew that she'd been trying hard to break. His friendship with Kate had been one of the unexpected bonuses of this whole messy situation. Alone, he knew that either of them would have struggled to cope, but as a team, they had found that they had a strength that was far greater than the sum of its parts. When one of them had faltered, the other had stood strong. They had supported each other and supported Sherlock, and John couldn't help feeling more than a little proud of what they had achieved together.

Finally, Kate finished reading, closed the laptop and turned to John.

'Well?' she asked.

'You first.'

'I thought that I'd seen the worst of it. But that stuff with the boy - Daniel. Did you know about that?'

'Something came up when I went to Cantley Hall. I knew that the groundsman was the one who had found Sherlock after he had allegedly thrown himself out of that tree. I had no idea that he was responsible for his injuries.'

'So, Sherlock's father arranged the second set of ECT in Elmhurst to ensure that he wouldn't remember and implicate him?'

'It makes sense, doesn't it?'

'But if there were others - as Sherlock seems to think that there were, shouldn't we tell the police?'

John shook his head. 'You can't prosecute somebody after their death, remember? Besides, it would mean Sherlock making what happened to him public, and I would imagine that would be the last thing that he would want.'

'Perhaps,' Kate had said thoughtfully.

'What is it?'

'I can't help thinking there's something missing."

'Go on.'

'Well since when did Sherlock just stop investigating? There are threads there, vague mentions of other government ministers who visited Cantley for no apparent reason, and then it just - stops.'
'You think he took stuff out? Before he showed it to us?'

'It's possible isn't it?'

'But why?'

'I don't know,' Kate said shaking her head. 'All I know is that whatever he's done it's for a good reason. Perhaps there was stuff that he didn't want us to know. Not yet.'

'And what about the rest? All of the information that was in there.'

'Knowing about his past makes him seem - more complete, somehow, I suppose. It explains a lot.'

'It explains why Mycroft is so protective as well.'

'It's odd, but I sort of forget that it's Mycroft's story too. It's strange to know so much about his past, about his family history when I feel that I barely know him. It almost feels like intruding. Do you think that Sherlock is going to let him see it too?'

'Knowing Mycroft Holmes, if he hasn't already seen it then I'd be incredibly surprised,' John said.

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'Did you read it? Sherlock asked as Kate walked into his room. He was sitting on his bed, sketchbook propped on his knees, drawing. He sounded calm, and his posture was relaxed, but Kate knew him too well to be fooled by that.

'Here,' she said, throwing him his coat. 'Come for a walk with me.'

'Why?' he asked, immediately suspicious.

She leant forward and whispered in his ear, 'Because I don't think you'll want Anna to overhear the conversation that I want to have with you.' And she kissed him, not on the cheek but on the side of his neck, and he felt a flicker of the desire that had been absent since the beginning of his illness, catching him by surprise.

'Excellent idea,' he said aloud, accepting the hand she offered to pull him up from the bed.

They walked to the far end of the garden, accompanied not by Anna, but by Mark, who kept a respectable distance. 'Did you arrange this?' he asked.

'I just thought you would rather have a bit of space to talk,' she said, and he smiled at her, gripping her hand tighter.

'You don't seem shocked, Kate.'

'Should I be? John and I investigated most of it, don't forget. There weren't that many surprises.'

'Daniel Brierley?'

'No, I didn't know about that, but realistically there would always have been others, Sherlock, there always are.'
'Of course. You would have worked that out.'

He put an arm around her shoulders pulling her close as they walked, kissing the top of her head. It was one of the first spontaneous gestures of affection that he'd made since he'd been admitted to the clinic, and Kate was profoundly relieved by it. To be able to shift once more from carer back to girlfriend, even if only for a brief time, was a precious thing indeed. But she also knew when Sherlock was avoiding an issue, and when he was trying to cover something up.

'There's something that you're not telling us, isn't there, something that isn't in that dossier.'

'Yes.'

'Is it going to cause trouble.'

'Yes.'

'Good trouble or bad trouble?'

'Depends on who you are.'

'Have you talked to Ed Harris about this?'

'Yes.'

'And?'

'And he understands what I'm doing and why.'

'And he agrees?'

'He appears to, yes.'

'And presumably your not telling me and John so that we can't be held responsible?'

'Correct.'

'Then I'll try to restrain my curiosity.'

'Did anything else in that dossier surprise you, Kate?' he asked as they came to a fork in the path and chose the option that led the furthest away from the main buildings.

'Not really. Your mother's story hit me hardest,' He squeezed her a little closer in response. 'She gave up so much Sherlock, to marry your father, and she had such a hard time of it.'

'It doesn't put you off?' The words were spoken lightly, but she knew that the emotion behind them was anything but.

'Put me off? Because you might turn out like your father? No of course not. Don't be ridiculous. You're nothing like him.'

'No, I'm not.'

'I'm proud of you, you know that? Going through all of that data to compile the dossier, dredging up all of those memories. It can't have been easy.'

'It wasn't. But it was necessary.'
'So are you done now?'
'I think so, yes.'
'Anna wants us to have a discharge meeting - you, me, John, Ed Harris.'
'Why?'
'To discuss you coming home.'
'Don't you ever get bored of discussing things, Kate?'
'I want you home, Sherlock, but I want it done the right way. I want you home, and well, and to make sure you stay that way, and if it takes a thousand meetings to accomplish that, then I'll sit through all of them.'

And he had pulled her closer as they walked, his arm around her shoulders, her arm around his waist. As they reached the perimeter of the grounds and followed the path around, they discussed what they had discovered about his past, and when they had exhausted that topic, what they wanted from the future that Sherlock was finally able to begin to contemplate.
Chapter 54

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Coming home had been - easy. He hadn't expected it to be easy. He had been warned time again of what to expect; the sense of loss, that his life was no longer what it should have been; the triggers of familiar objects firing uncomfortable memories; the seemingly insurmountable obstacles of daily tasks; the loss of the security of the clinic making daily life, daily irritations into a battle zone.

He walked into 221b cautiously, waiting for the panic to hit, but it didn't come. He walked slowly round the sitting room, brushing the back of his chair with the back of his hand, letting his fingers linger over a book, the skull on the mantelpiece. Their familiarity was comforting, and the sense of threat that he'd felt during the weeks of his illness had dissipated without trace.

It seemed lighter than he remembered, the windows letting out a tell-tale rainbow as the light hit them. 'You cleaned,' he said, turning slightly towards Kate, who was perched on the corner of the sofa watching him.

'I had a lot of spare time on my hands,' she said. 'Do you mind?'

He shook his head, 'No. It looks - better, more ordered, simpler.'

'I didn't throw anything away. I just packed up some of your papers and stuff, put them in document boxes, just until -'

'Thank you,' he said, standing at the window still, looking out onto the street now.

'You okay?' Kate asked. 'I mean, I know that it must be odd. Coming home, being back where -'

'It's fine, Kate. It's -'

Arms reached around him from behind, Kate's warm cheek resting against his back, and they stood silently for a while, his hands coming up to cover hers. 'I love you, you know that?' she said finally.

'I know,' he said, leaning back into her slightly, watching Baker Street below. There was a car there, engine idling, waiting just outside of his direct line of vision. He moved Kate's hands away and leant forward slightly to look, but the car moved off before he could confirm his suspicions.

'What is it?' Kate asked.

'Trouble,' he told her, realising that he was smiling slightly at the prospect.

'What sort of trouble?'

'The sort that Anna would tell me that I'm not ready for.'

The car entered Baker Street again from the other end, driving slowly past until Sherlock pushed up the sash window stuck his head out and shouted, 'Why don't you come on up Mycroft?'

'Mycroft?' Kate asked. 'What's he doing here?'

'Keeping an eye on me, I would imagine.'
Was it really going to be that simple, Kate wondered? For Sherlock to slip back into his old life as easily as putting on that coat of his. And yet there was something in his face that she hadn't seen for weeks. Interest, amusement, the prospect of conflict perhaps?

The knock on the door made her jump as she went to open it.

Mycroft was alone, the driver obviously waiting in the car downstairs. He held a bundle of newspapers under his arm. 'Kate,' he said with a nod. 'Did you know?'

'Know what? Mycroft, Sherlock's only been home about ten minutes. What is this all about?'

'You didn't tell her?' He asked Sherlock, who had resumed his old seat in his chair, long legs outstretched, fingers templed as he watched his brother with amusement.

'Tell me what?' Kate demanded, forgetting that Sherlock had only been discharged from a psychiatric unit that morning, forgetting that she was meant to be keeping him calm, to ease him back into his daily life, but then this was his daily life wasn't it? Chaos and conflict. She was starting to regret declining Anna's offer to bring Sherlock home and help settle him in.

But Sherlock didn't look shocked, or anxious, or surprised. He looked controlled, he looked smug.

'Sherlock, what have you done?' she asked quietly.

'I have no idea what you're talking about,' he replied innocently.

And in answer Mycroft slowly tipped the stack of newspapers into his lap. Sherlock failed to move so they slid, one after another onto the floor, where they lay fanned out so that Kate couldn't fail to read the headlines. 'Scandal in the House of Lords!' read one, 'Paedophile ring at the top of government!' read another. Kate sank to her knees and picked up the one closest to her, starting to read. The scale of it, the extent of what had been revealed, was beyond even her imagining.

'It wasn't just your father,' she murmured, and then when neither brother replied, looked up to find them engaged in some kind of childish staring contest. She noted with satisfaction that Mycroft was the one who blinked first.

'Some warning would have been courteous,' he said finally.

'Why? So you could have stopped them printing it?' Sherlock retorted.

'Is that what you think that I would have done?'

'Wouldn't you?'

'No, Sherlock, I wouldn't. Your timing was questionable, however.'

'Why do you assume that the timing was mine?'

'Because nobody else could have dug out those details after all this time. It seems a coincidence, don't you think, that this story just happens to break the day that you're released from the clinic?'

Sherlock stood up so suddenly that Kate, still half kneeling by the papers, found herself scuttling backwards to remove herself from the conflict zone. There was an edge to his voice that made her feel uneasy - anger, barely controlled. 'Do you honestly think, Mycroft, that I would have chosen for the story to break now, had it been within my control?'

'You - didn't leak it to the press.'
'No.'

'Then who did?'

'Lestrade, possibly. I gave him the file to investigate. I would imagine that this is his way of encouraging other victims to come forward.'

Mycroft Holmes shook his head at his brother. 'Why would you want it made public Sherlock, why now?'

Kate looked from one brother to the other. Something was off. Mycroft wasn't as angry as he appeared to be, and he wasn't shocked either, not remotely. What he was doing, was acting.

'You could have waited a few days, Mycroft,' she said, as she worked it out.

'What do you mean?'

'Exactly what I said. You could have waited to leak it until Sherlock had been home a few more days. I appreciate that you need other victims to come forward, and you didn't want the whole thing buried by the establishments but still -'

Sherlock was looking at her in confusion. 'What on earth are you talking about?'

Kate grinned at him. 'You mean I worked it out before you did? That's got to be a first. Mycroft leaked it, Sherlock. I presume it's his way of making amends.'

'Why on earth would I do that?' Mycroft asked.

'Because whatever Sherlock may choose to believe, you do care about him,' Kate said. 'You failed to protect him before, this is your way of doing it now.'

The staring contest seemed to have switched to between Kate and Mycroft, but Kate had learnt from a master, and besides, she knew that she was right. She raised an eyebrow at him and was rewarded when he looked away with a gesture of defeat,

'Well deduced, Kate,' he said, his tone entirely changed now. 'Of course, if you'd told me that my brother was going to be released today then I would had delayed the leak. I assumed that he would still be safely in the clinic for another week or more.'

'You hacked the laptop?' Sherlock asked, staring at Mycroft.

'Of course. I had to know what you were uncovering, Sherlock. I had to make sure that you weren't going to do anything - unwise.'

'So you leaked it yourself?'

'Lestrade was being a little too cautious. My superiors were aware and were considering burying the case. I had hoped to pin it on a leak from the police. I trust I can rely on your discretion?'

Kate looked at Sherlock, concerned about how he would take this. He stared at Mycroft in disbelief for several minutes, then his face broke into a grin and he looked down. 'Thank you,' he said quietly, before throwing himself back down into the armchair and starting to leaf through the stack of papers.

'Will you get into trouble?' Kate asked Mycroft.

'Oh, don't worry, it can't be traced back to me. Had Lestrade tried it, then the implications for his
career would have been severe. This way absolves him of responsibility. And I am significantly more adept at keeping myself out of the firing line."

'I'm sure that you are,' Kate said, and then walked over and kissed Mycroft on the cheek. 'Thank you,' she said. He looked surprised, but also rather pleased.

'I did what needed to be done,' he said.

'No, you didn't. You did what Sherlock wanted done. That's why I'm thanking you.'

'Is he ready for this, Kate?' Mycroft asked quietly, looking at Sherlock, who was now thoroughly engrossed in his pile of newspapers.

'As ready as he'll ever be, I think. He needs this, Mycroft. He needs to finish this to get better.'

'Then I will leave him in your capable hands,' Mycroft said, as he made his way to the door.

And as Kate closed the door, she turned back to watch Sherlock, engrossed in the press reports. Everything was as it should be. Sherlock was back in his chair at 221b, absorbed in as close to a case as he could get at the moment, John was downstairs, and would wander up later, in search of a cup of tea and some company and would end up staying for dinner. And Anna was on the end of the phone, ready to be contacted before her appointment with Sherlock later this afternoon if the need arose. But somehow, Kate was fairly sure that they wouldn't need to call her.

There were no guarantees, Kate knew that. This wasn't an illness that was going to miraculously disappear overnight, and it would always be a part of their lives. But it was also a part of Sherlock. Without it, he would be someone else entirely. 'I would rather have you sane and ordinary than mad and brilliant,' she had told him, on an evening that felt half a lifetime away. But the truth was, she would rather have him as Sherlock, whatever that involved. And if the storm clouds gathered again then they would deal with them together. Just as they had this time.

Chapter End Notes

And that's it. All finished. Sherlock is well on his way to recovery, and back at 221b where he belongs.

Thank you all so, so much for reading and reviewing.

Will there a part 4? Well maybe. Depends on how nicely you all ask really ;)

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