Five Times Sherlock Holmes Proposed and the One Time John Watson Didn't Laugh At It

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Summary

John keeps laughing every time Sherlock attempts to discuss marriage. Truly, it's enough to get on anyone's nerves.

Notes

See the end of the work for notes
**Five Times Sherlock Holmes Proposed**

*One*

They fell back on the sheets; sweat still cooling on their skin as Sherlock curled closer to John’s chest. Absentmindedly, John began stroking his fingers through Sherlock’s curls. Sherlock pressed his face into the doctor’s good shoulder, nuzzling the skin at the base of his neck gently.

He inhaled, taking John’s scent and filing it away yet again in his mind palace. It was so unique, unlike anything else in the world. Just like John himself, the scent at first seemed soft and homey, but upon closer inspection, was layered with notes of spicy sharpness and steel. He was the sort of man who would defend you to the last stand, but also the one who would patch you up after a minor battle. Someone who both protected and looked after.

Sherlock had never had anyone like that in his life before, someone who cared so much and so openly about him. He knew Mycroft worried over him, and that Lestrade and Mrs. Hudson both viewed him as a sort of son, but this was different, vastly beyond their affections towards him. John viewed him as an equal in all things, not someone to be shielded or pitied because he functioned on a level separate from the mundane.

John was Sherlock’s partner in all things.

“Marry me,” Sherlock murmured, burrowing closer to John’s skin. Though the words were an impulse, he meant them wholeheartedly.

He didn’t expect John to start giggling.

“Perhaps someday, love,” was all John would say, laughter still shaking his chest. A hurt noise escaped from Sherlock’s mouth before he could stop it, and John tugged him closer again, pressing gentle kisses across Sherlock’s face. After a moment, Sherlock relaxed and let go of the hurt. He’d try again, at a more opportune time when John would take him seriously.

*Two*

A more opportune time occurred over a dead body.

Sherlock’s mind was working in frenzy, taking in every aspect of the scene as they approached the scene, from Donovan and Anderson’s continuing affair to the type of jacket the killer had worn when fleeing the scene. His mind whirred, drinking in the variables and spitting out the possibilities. Suddenly, everything froze.

His hand shot out and steadied John as he wobbled on an uneven patch of pavement. John shot him a grateful look, then gestured for him to begin his deductions. Instead of speaking, Sherlock strode over to the body, already having gleaned everything he could from it on the approach but relishing in the time he got to observe John without John realizing it.

Around the flat or when they were out and about, John knew Sherlock was observing him, and so was actively concealing or displaying certain things. On a case, however, John assumed Sherlock would be absorbed by his work, and he was usually correct. This was the exception, and Sherlock was always thrilled to exploit exceptions.

John moved with practice grace, striding in a smooth soldier’s walk around the scene. His eyes flashed about, side to side as if scanning for hostiles. Which, knowing John, he was. His hands no
longer shook and he no longer limped, two things that made Sherlock inexplicably proud. Originally Sherlock had intended to cure John simply to prove he could, but now he was so grateful he’d been able to help the man who had wound up helping Sherlock in ways the detective was barely beginning to grasp.

The doctor now stood next to Sherlock, his warmth a tangible presence pressing against Sherlock’s side. Without a thought, he reached out and tangled his fingers with John’s. Ignoring the vaguely shocked Yarders, he lifted John’s hand up to brush the back of it with his lips, smirking as the doctor jolted in surprise.

How had Sherlock gone for so long without this hand in his, without this man beside him?

“Marry me, John,” Sherlock said again. John started to laugh.

“Because nothing says ‘romance’ like a corpse,” his doctor chuckled, extricating his hand from Sherlock’s grasp and soothing the rejection with a light kiss on the cheek. “Go on,” he said, playfully swatting Sherlock while the Yarders looked on in mixed awe and horror, “Get your work done.”

Sherlock scowled a little as John turned away, but quickly revealed the suspect as a member of the small crowd gathered at the end of the police tape before hailing a cab and heading home with John in tow.

Three

He really hadn’t meant to get them arrested this time. How was he to know that he’d maxed out his favors with Scotland Yard? Donovan was just looking for reasons to arrest him at this point, and unfortunately Lestrade hadn’t precisely agreed with his methods of interrogation this time around. Evidently experimentation on the suspect was frowned upon by the general populace. As if Sherlock cared what the general populace did and did not approve of. He sought no approval.

“I am sorry,” Sherlock commented as John paid his bail.

All right, perhaps he sought the approval of one.

While Sherlock made his explanations to John, who had been at the surgery at the time of Sherlock’s arrest, John grinned happily. Amusement fit him so well, it made his features dance and his eyes snap beautifully. Truly, Sherlock must try to make John happy more often.

As they headed for the street, John shook his head indulgently. “You know, one of these days, I might not be around to bail you out,” John said. His voice was light, his tone teasing, but it struck a nerve in Sherlock.

“You would if you’d marry me,” Sherlock tossed back. John started chuckling, his shoulders shaking a bit as he tossed out an arm to hail a cab. Three drove right past his diminutive figure without slowing once before Sherlock got impatient and waved one down within seconds.

“I’ll never understand how you do that so quickly.” John was still laughing, as if this was all one great joke he was sharing with Sherlock. Unfortunately, Sherlock didn’t find it funny at all.

Each time he’d mentioned getting married, John had laughed. Why? Was the idea of committing to Sherlock that ridiculous? They hadn’t even defined what they were now –more than friends, obviously, but boyfriends sounded childish.

They pulled up to 221B. “Don’t breathe a word of this to Mrs. Hudson. She’ll kill me if she knows I let you get yourself arrested again,” John whispered conspiratorially, kissing Sherlock lightly on the
lips before dragging him inside the building.

*Four*

“John, I’m sorry, so sorry, and nothing I say will make it all right, but know that if it hadn’t been absolutely necessary I never would have left you,” Sherlock rushed out on a breath. John clenched his fists in anger and squeezed his eyes shut, either to contain tears, block out the sight of Sherlock, or perhaps both.

He took a shuddering breath. “I don’t think you are quite grasping this situation. You. Faked. Your. Suicide. Have you any idea what that was like for me? Thinking I’d missed all the signs, that you weren’t- weren’t happy.” His voice broke, shattering Sherlock’s heart. He hadn’t intended for it to take so long, but he needed to be sure John was safe, protected, before he resurfaced.

“I can’t tell you how much it hurt, being away from you,” Sherlock said, trying to hit on the words that would make John open his eyes, make him smile and kiss him and make things okay between them. These weren’t the right words.

“Sherlock,” John started, and Sherlock sat up in hopes. This was the first time during their lengthy argument that John had said his name. “I watched you die. You made me watch that, forced me to suffer through it, through that damn phone call, and all the while you knew you were going to live. Don’t you see how much that hurts?”

“I didn’t know I was going to live.”

“What?”

“I didn’t know for certain. I had perhaps a thirty percent chance of survival. That’s why I called you. I didn’t- I didn’t want to die without hearing your voice one last time,” Sherlock admitted. These words felt better, felt truer somehow, and they seemed to be the right ones. John’s eyes were still closed, but his fists had opened and his body had relaxed.

Seated in the quiet pause after his admission, Sherlock was able to drink in John’s presence, something he’d missed for three years. John seemed older, thinner, and haggard by the interim years. Sherlock felt a pang of guilt; much of that was grief-induced, grief that only existed because of Sherlock’s actions. He wanted so much to protect John physically that he had neglected to consider how this would emotionally have affected the man.

He crossed the room, kneeling gently before John but not touching him. “I never want to be without you again, John. Marry me,” he half-begged.

John barked out a humorless laugh. “No, Sherlock, that’s not how this works. You can’t waltz back into my life and expect me to pick up where we left off. Get out, I need to think.”

For once, Sherlock obeyed.

*Five*

John was moving back in, and Sherlock was elated. It had taken months of tentative cases and walking on eggshells around each other, but John was finally ready to move back to the flat. He’d made it clear that they would be taking things very slowly, just friends for the time being, but Sherlock was confident he could talk John out of that particular mandate. It had been three years, Sherlock missed his partner and wanted him back in all faculties.

“Are you going to help me unpack, or are you just going to laze about all day?” John called from the
upstairs bedroom.

Sherlock rolled off the couch, not even bothering to sit up at first. Instead he laid flat on the floor staring at the ceiling. “I was considering the latter,” Sherlock shouted back. He heard John guffaw as he banged about with his things.

It was already wonderful to have John back in the flat. In his absence, the flat had felt confining, cold and clinical. Now that John had returned, so had the warmth and… hominess. The silences felt friendlier somehow, and the noise was a lovely background to Sherlock’s thinking.

“John,” Sherlock called, “Marry me!”

His friend’s laughter echoed through the stairwell. “Marriage will not get you out of helping me. Get off your bum and head upstairs. I can’t quite reach some of the higher shelves.”
The One Time John Watson Didn't Laugh At It

Four years since the Fall. Three of them spent dismantling Moriarty’s web, and one spent waiting for John. Then again, one could make the argument that Sherlock had spent his entire life waiting for John Watson, as well as his entire death.

John woke with a start, feeling as if he’d just called out but not aware of what. A moment later, Sherlock flung open the bedroom door and came crashing in, a pistol blazing in one hand and his hair wild with sleep.

“’M sorry,” John slurred, “Go back t’ bed. Was jus’ a dream.” Sherlock ignored his protests, crossing the room and crawling onto the bed next to John.

“You’re shaking,” Sherlock pointed out. John studied his hands. So he was. Vibrating even. “And crying.” Sherlock raised a finger to John’s cheeks and it came away shining with tears. John frowned.

“What are you doing here anyway?” John asked, his mind waking up.

“You called out for me, I thought you needed me,” Sherlock said, setting the pistol aside as he scooted closer to John.

“I always need you,” John replied without a thought. Sherlock smiled, and John flushed with embarrassment. The detective carefully spread out next to John, wrapping his arms around the small doctor.

“What was the dream about?” he asked, whispering into John’s ear and making the man shiver a bit.

“You. Always you, since- since Bart’s. I’m always too late,” John forced the words out from between clenched teeth. Sherlock’s arms tighten around John’s middle possessively, trying to ease some of the tension in the army man’s body.

“If there had been another way, I would have taken it. But I could not then, nor can I ever, put you in danger like that,” Sherlock said fiercely. John rolled over in the detective’s arms until they were face to face. Sherlock didn’t need to be a genius to understand where this was going.

“Is this- are you alright with this happening?” Sherlock asked. When John nodded, Sherlock felt acute relief wash over him. He didn’t like being uncertain, and now he knew without a doubt John was okay with being more again.

But suddenly that wasn’t enough.

Sherlock stood up abruptly, feeling a dash of regret when he saw the stung look on John’s face before he dashed downstairs to fetch something. When he came back up, he delighted in the surprise John showed.

“I only needed to retrieve something,” Sherlock said, holding up his closed fist as he knelt down. “John Hamish Watson, I love you, and I never want to live another day like the past, having had you and then being forced to be without you. I want to be with you every day of forever and another forever after that. I know I’ve asked before, and you’ve never answered, so I’ll ask one more time. John, will you please marry me?” He opened his hand, displaying a ring.

For a terrifying moment he thought John was going to laugh again.
Instead, John broke into a smile.

“Of course I’ll marry you, you great clod,” John said, getting off the bed and seating himself across Sherlock’s lap.

This time, it was Sherlock who laughed.

End Notes

I have no excuse for this gratuitous amount of schmoop.

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